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Biographical recollections  
of the Rev. Robert Hall, A









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BIOGRAPHICAL

RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

BY J. W. MORRIS.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE present volume would have appeared much earlier, had not the author been under an engagement to withhold the publication for two years, to give opportunity for reprinting and getting into circulation the complete Works of Mr. Hall, with their accompaniments. As a necessary consequence, several articles have been anticipated by previous writers, which would otherwise have added to the interest of the narrative, and only such retained as were necessary to its cohesion and continuity.

The difficulty of collecting the requisite materials, and giving them in a shape corresponding with the interest and magnitude of the subject, will readily be perceived, when it is known that no diary or private memorandums were found at any time to exist; that no direct information could be elicited from Mr. Hall himself, who

studied concealment as much as others studied to be acquainted with his history, nothing being more abhorrent from his feelings than the most distant approach to whatever had the appearance of egotism.

Having known and been acquainted with him for the space of forty eight years, I judged it not improbable that my own memoranda and recollections might furnish a variety of facts and circumstances that could not well be known to others, and afford gratification to a numerous class of readers, who would dwell with peculiar interest on the incidents of such a life. I have also to acknowledge my obligations to several friends, who not only recommended the present attempt, but supplied a variety of valuable items, and pointed out other sources of information.

The eminent individual himself, certainly, neither desired nor expected that any memorial should be written of him, as is evident from the following very curious incident, not now introduced for the purpose of gratifying any feelings of vanity, or of exciting expectations that cannot be gratified, but as forming some apology at least for my having prepared the following sheets for publication.



In the act of collecting materials and obtaining information from various quarters, with the utmost care and circumspection, that the ear of modesty might not be offended, it so happened that one confidential friend, with no ill design, betrayed the secret. The late Mr. Mack was on a visit at Bristol, in December 1827, and in conversation with Mr. Hall mentioned the intended memoir, and the name of the writer. Mr. Hall was startled, and instantly exclaimed, “Memoirs of *my* life, sir! I cannot imagine there is any thing worth writing about *me*! But if it *must* be so, there is no person I should prefer to the author of Mr. Fuller’s Memoirs. My only objection would be, lest the partiality of friendship should overcharge the portrait.”

At a later period I had occasion to apply to Sir James Mackintosh, for any information he could give of Mr. Hall’s college life at Aberdeen, or on any subsequent part of his history. Sir James, not knowing the applicant, confided my letter to an officious individual, who immediately made it his business to alarm the apprehensions of Mr. Hall and of some of his friends, but with only a transient effect, his friendship and his kindness remaining unabated to the end of life.

Despairing of any thing like an adequate memorial, or of doing justice to the subject I have ventured to sketch, I have attempted no other classification of my materials, than simply that of following the order of events as they occurred, though in this I cannot in every instance be equally confident. The circumstances in which Mr. Hall's publications originated, or with which they were accompanied, together with occasional extracts for the gratification of such as are not in possession of his invaluable works, are given with as much brevity as the case would admit; the leading design being to exhibit his religious character, rather than his intellectual greatness, and to furnish a memorial for that part of the community which held him in veneration chiefly on account of his eminent piety.

Some of the anecdotes and minor circumstances may to a fastidious taste appear too trivial for public notice; and apart by themselves they would have been so; but nothing pertaining to so great a character can properly be considered as unimportant, if it tends to elucidate the peculiar tact and genius of the individual. Nor has it appeared necessary wholly to suppress the painful part of the narrative relating to Mr. Hall's mental malady,

which in pure and generous minds could produce no other feeling than that of the deepest sympathy, and of devout gratitude to that wise and merciful providence which prevented its recurrence, and lengthened out a long unclouded day of usefulness and peace. Hayley's censurable folly in attempting to conceal what all the world was before acquainted with, and the consequences it produced, are a sufficient warning against the affectation of imitating such an example.

If any one should think that in the following pages I have only performed "the futile office of a panegyrist," he is quite welcome to that opinion. I want no apology for my admiration of such an assemblage of intellectual and moral excellence, and should deem it an essential defect to be destitute of such a feeling. I have been anxious only to give a correct statement of what came under my own observation, or was sufficiently authenticated by the testimony of others; and with the exception of unconscious inadvertencies, I confidently believe that in no instance has there been the least departure from truth. Those who best knew Mr. Hall will be ready to say, not one half has yet been told them; and had he lived in the days of St. Ambrose, of Pascal, or

the abbot Bernard, the testimony borne of his extraordinary talents and piety would have been perfectly credible, without any additional voucher.

The present work, from the very nature of its construction, labours under all the disadvantages of a miscellaneous production, where it is so difficult to preserve a close connection; but no other plan so properly admitted of the incidental detail, in which so many would be interested. In other respects the execution exhibits numerous defects, requiring the forbearance of the candid and intelligent reader; but such as it is, with all its imperfections, I venture to present it as a testimony of affectionate respect to the memory of my departed and dearly beloved friend.

BUNGAY,  
*June 12th 1833.*

J. W. MORRIS.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL RECOLLECTIONS.

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### SECTION I.

A. D. 1764—1777.

THE eminent individual whose talents and piety have shed a lustre upon the history of the christian church, and to whose memory these pages are affectionately devoted, was the son of the Rev. ROBERT HALL, whose ancestors were respectable yeomen in the neighbourhood of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Mr. Hall left Northumberland in 1753, and became pastor of the baptist church at Arnsby, a small village eight miles south of Leicester, on the Welford road, where for nearly forty years he laboured with great patience and success, ‘endured a great fight of afflictions,’ and was much admired for his wisdom and godly simplicity.

Robert, the youngest of a numerous family, was born on the 2nd of May 1764, and brought up in the obscure village of Arnsby. During infancy he was remarkably feeble, and for about two years

was under the care of a nurse. At one time his life was so nearly extinct, that as he lay on his mother's lap, she exclaimed in agony, He is gone—the child is dead! So thought others who were present, but were happily mistaken. As he grew and strengthened, his faculties began to develope themselves in an unusual manner. Before he was well able to articulate he readily learned the alphabet from the gravestones, pointed out by his nurse, in the burying-ground belonging to the meeting-house. As soon as he could read a little he became so passionately fond of books that he carried them about in his pinafore, till it was full of holes and tatters, and would not part with them for any toys that might be offered. After returning from school he retired to the graveyard when the weather permitted; seated himself on the grass, with his library spread around him, and there spent the remainder of the day in gratifying his thirst of knowledge. To render his reading more intelligible he usually took with him a pocket dictionary, to explain any difficult word that might occur; and thus by the time he was five or six years old his ideas began to accumulate.

At seven years of age he was fond of preaching, in imitation of his beloved father; and for this purpose he collected his playfellows and some of the servants, and addressed them on the subject of religion. And though these exercises might be considered as bearing in some degree the character of infantile amusement, the pious servant who



watched over all his movements with parental solicitude, repeatedly affirmed that there were in all of them indications of great seriousness, and that no reasonable doubt could be entertained but religious principles had at that early period a decided influence upon his mind. The same individual, distinguished for strong sense and sterling piety, used to derive comfort and satisfaction from these recollections, whenever the object of her early care was at any subsequent period depressed with feelings of despondency; and in her own homely style old Nancy used to say, "I will answer for it that my dear Bobby knew the Lord before he was seven years of age." In truth, he was in the habit of secret prayer before he could speak plain.

In the course of a year or two his health began to be affected, and put on a consumptive appearance. His father procured for him a small pony, hoping that a little exercise in the open air might be beneficial. By short stages Robert sometimes accompanied him on horseback to Kettering, a distance of more than twenty miles, where he met with a kind reception from Beeby Wallis, esq., one of the deacons of the baptist church, and the descendant of an honourable line of ancestors, of whom it might be said, as Mr. Hall afterwards remarked, "that probity, candour and benevolence, constituted the family likeness."

The wan and sickly appearance of young Robert, engaging the attention of his hospitable friend, he prevailed with his father to leave him awhile under

his care for the benefit of his health. Mr. Wallis, at all times pleased with the shrewd and witty remarks of the youthful visitor, took him into the garden early in the morning to gather esculent snails, but had much difficulty in persuading him to swallow the living mucilage. Robert urged several ingenious objections ; and at length, that if he received the nauseous potion he should soon be like Herod, ‘who was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.’ He was induced at last to make the experiment ; and after repeated visits to the hospitable mansion of his friend, his health apparently improved. Mr. Wallis was warmly attached to Mr. Fuller, then of Soham, and had so high an opinion of his character and abilities, that after the church at Kettering had become destitute of a pastor, he advised them to wait several years in the hope of finally obtaining him ; and when at length Mr. Fuller’s acceptance of their invitation was read before the church, Mr. Wallis rose up and said with great emphasis, ‘Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’

During these early visits at Kettering, Mr. Wallis took so much delight in the promising abilities of his young friend, that he sometimes prevailed upon him to deliver a short address to a select audience in the vestry ; and on these occasions there were coruscations of genius which awakened the highest expectations. Such indeed was the precocity of intellect displayed in the very dawn of life, that it



might truly be said of him as it was of another intellectual prodigy, that he violently precipitated the ordinary march of nature, and leaped at once from childhood to manhood, without passing through the intermediate stage of human existence. Before he was nine years of age he read and understood the profoundly argumentative treatises of President Edwards on the "Affections," and on the "Will," which he candidly acknowledged in a conversation with his faithful nurse, in the summer of 1826. Four years afterwards he made the same acknowledgment to an intimate friend who visited him at Bristol, though it does not appear that he fully adopted Edwards's theory until the latter part of life, nor even then without some hesitation and reserve. At the time the first conversation took place, he was anxious to induce the belief, that all such mental efforts were premature; that they indicated nothing extraordinary, and were only the abortive production of the greenhouse or the hotbed. Pressed with other remarks and early anecdotes he at length admitted, there might possibly be some things rather singular in the early period of his life, but that these had long ago passed away, and nothing now was left to distinguish him from the commonest of our species.

The elder Mr. Hall frequently visited Kettering, during the destitute state of the church, and his preaching, conversation and advice, excited no ordinary degree of interest. At one of these

interviews he hinted to his friend Mr. Wallis, "that his son Bob," as he used to call him, "was a strange sort of a boy, and he did not know what to do with him. He had sent him to school in a neighbouring village, and the master had called to say it was of no use his being with him any longer. Bob had quickly learned up all and more than all that he could teach him, and he was more fit himself to become his scholar than his teacher." By the advice, and probably with the assistance of Mr. Wallis, the pious father consented to place him under the care of the Rev. John Ryland, who at that time conducted a large and respectable seminary at Northampton.

This gentleman, the father of Dr. John Ryland, possessed a vigorous understanding, various learning, a vivid imagination, and a range of talents that rendered him one of the most popular preachers of the day: for zeal and fidelity he had few equals, and none could surpass the bold and daring nature of his eloquence. His eccentricities were numerous and remarkable, his piety unquestionable; to a stranger his manners were sufficiently terrific, though in reality no man possessed more genuine kindness, or more enlarged and disinterested benevolence. With all his failings, and without any written memorial of his life and labours, he was one of the brightest ornaments of the last century.

Robert Hall, on his first introduction to the school at Northampton by his father, was invited

to spend the evening in the parlour, where his new teacher happened to have a party of gentlemen to supper. The conversation turned on the policy of the war, which England had commenced with the American colonies. Mr. Ryland, at all times the ardent friend of liberty and the advocate of the oppressed, entered upon an animated defence of the Americans, and condemned the measures pursued against them. The impassioned harangue filled the mind of his young pupil with admiration and dread; at the same time it inspired him with the love of liberty, a passion which he afterwards cherished to the end of life, never failing to consider it essential to the very existence of public virtue.

“Were I the American commanding-officer,” said the honest and intrepid John Ryland, in an attitude of indignant defiance, “I would call together all my comrades and brother officers. I would order every man to bare his arm, that a portion of blood might be extracted, and mixed in one basin on the table. I would then command every one to draw his sword and dip the point of it in the basin, and swear by the great Eternal never to sheathe the consecrated blade, till he had achieved the freedom of his country. If after this any one should turn coward or traitor, I should feel it a duty, a pleasure, a luxury, to plunge my weapon into that man’s heart.” The vehement and tragic manner in which the incomparable John Ryland spoke and acted all this, was so vividly depicted

on the mind of young Robert Hall, as he affirmed many years afterwards, that the impression could never be effaced.

It is related that in the early part of his pupilage at Northampton he was considered as rather unpromising, and not likely to make much proficiency. He neither took pleasure in the common amusements of youth, nor fell into the train or current of his associates, but might be seen standing or walking alone, dwelling upon his own thoughts, and avoiding general intercourse. If occasionally sent on an errand he either forgot his message, or made some mistake in the delivery, and would take an order for mutton and beef to a grocer's, as readily as to a butcher's shop. The frequent recurrence of such ludicrous mistakes rendered him of course an object of curiosity and amusement to his juvenile companions, who would easily construe into a want of common sense what in reality indicated an abstraction of mind, common to nearly all geniuses of the higher order.

The senior Mr. Ryland, to stimulate the exertions of his pupils, gave them subjects on which to write, and the best composition carried off the prize. This placed young Robert in a state of direct competition, and roused his dormant faculties, which in this new situation had met with no particular excitement. No sooner was he forced into the ranks for this species of literary fame, than he produced a theme which not only sur-



passed the efforts of all his competitors, but afforded great delight to his tutor. At various intervals were discovered traits of genius, and bursts of imagination, that could not be mistaken for the operations of an ordinary mind. Mr. Ryland thought so highly of these attempts at composition that he sent some of them for insertion in the periodical publications of the day, before the writer had well attained the eleventh year of his age.

It is often seen that some latent faculty is roused and called into action by some transient and accidental cause, which like the electric flash, kindles up a sudden and inextinguishable blaze; and many of the later acquirements in life may be traced to some early impression, which either gave the first impulse, or accelerated the course of thought and feeling afterwards pursued. It cannot be doubted but the mind of Robert Hall must naturally have been endued with an exquisite relish for whatever is chaste and beautiful in composition, yet he himself conceived that this taste was first inspired by an unforeseen occurrence during his pupilage at Northampton. Speaking of Mr. Robins of Daventry, the tutor of his amiable friend Mr. Toller, he says that “among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and perhaps I may be excused in observing, that the first perception of these qualities which I remember to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach on a public

occasion at Northampton." He then speaks of the compositions of this eloquent preacher as having been rendered highly impressive and delightful, by the correct and lively imagination they displayed, and their being embodied in language of the most classic purity.\* Such it seems was the model he selected while a schoolboy, and such his early perception of what was rich and beautiful in style and sentiment.

Robert continued at Northampton about eighteen months, making rapid improvement in classical and mathematical learning; but the indifferent state of his health, and the frequent recurrence of pain, unfitted him for close application, and required a relaxation from school exercises. In the twelfth year of his age he returned to his native village, where, with the benefit of country air, he would have every opportunity of prosecuting his religious enquiries, under the able and judicious instructions of his excellent father, and of preparing his mind for future usefulness.

His sprightly wit and obliging manners rendered him a great favourite at home, and among the neighbours; and as his father occupied a few acres of land, an endowment which belongs to the congregation at Arnsby, constituting the principal part of the minister's support, he frequently accompanied him into the field to converse with the labourers, who were highly entertained with his shrewd and witty observations. In these days of

\* Memoir of Mr. Toller.

juvenility he was also very fond of a hoax, and displayed no small degree of ingenuity in the execution. Observing one day a farmer's servant carrying a bag, containing a sucking pig as a present to his father, and putting it down outside the door, Robert contrived to abstract the roaster, while the man went in with his message, and put in a young dog instead. The unsuspecting countryman carried in the intended present, with his master's respects, but found on opening the sack a transformation which filled him with terror and amasement, while Robert secretly placed himself within view of this curious comedy. In all the sports and gambols with his playfellows he always took the lead, and gave them reason ever after to remember his humour and adroitness.

Possibly, at this particular period, when the rural scenery around invited to so many pastimes, there might be some instances of daring or of injurious frivolity, to which he adverted with so much pain and sorrow in the latter part of life, when, like holy Job, he mourned over 'the iniquities of his youth;' for it is commonly observed, that where religious impressions are made in very early life, before the judgment has attained to any maturity, or the mind been 'rooted and grounded in love,' it has been followed with an interval of supineness, and the prevalence of corrupt affections. Yet in the present instance it is far more probable, that the lamentations so oft repeated were the result of a deeper insight into the evil



of sin, a deeper sense of innate depravity, accompanied with the painful recollection that 'childhood and youth are vanity,' rather than to any serious degree of spiritual declension. All who knew him bore witness that 'in him was found,' from the earliest dawn of reason, 'some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel,' and that he uniformly bore this character. The following entry in the church book at Arnsby is circumstantial and decisive upon the subject.

"On Lord's day, Aug. 23, 1778, Robert Hall, youngest son of our pastor Robert Hall, gave a very distinct account of his being the subject of spiritual grace. He was only fourteen years of age last May, and has appeared to be serious from his early childhood. He was baptised on Lord's day, Sep. 6th, and the same day was added to the church."

## SECTION II.

A. D. 1778—1780.

IN the following October he was introduced to Bristol Academy, which had been founded in 1770, under the superintendence of the Rev. Hugh Evans, A. M. and his son, afterwards Dr. Caleb Evans, who succeeded to the presidency, and was assisted in the classical department by the Rev. James Newton, A. M. Dr. Caleb Evans, pastor also of the baptist church at Broadmead, was possessed of extensive learning, of liberal sentiments, and captivating eloquence. The tutor and the pupil manifested a reciprocal attachment, and were fully aware of each others respective merits.

Though our young student had preached occasionally for some time before, in more retired situations, the recent change of circumstances encreased his diffidence and timidity to such a degree, that it was with difficulty he could be persuaded to engage in any public exercise, and failed in the first and second attempt. Acquiring a little more self-possession, he at the urgent request of his tutor, delivered a public discourse at Broad-

mead, when he was little more than fourteen. This singular fact was elicited, in the course of conversation, within the last year or two of his life.

Robert spent the first vacation at Arnsby, and in July 1779 he accompanied his father to the ordination of Mr. Skinner, the first pastor of the church at Clipstone in Northamptonshire. Among the ministers present on that occasion was the celebrated Mr. Beddome, so well known by his excellent Hymns and posthumous Sermons, and who, in conjunction with the senior Mr. Hall, conducted the principal services of the day. Interested by the conversation and appearance of young Robert, Mr. Beddome was extremely anxious that he should be engaged to preach the evening lecture; but he continued for some time to resist every importunity, and left the company. Followed by the entreaties of an intimate friend\* he at length complied, and entered the pulpit for the first time before an audience of ministers, whom he had been accustomed from his childhood to look up to with feelings of reverence,—a dismaying undertaking for a youth of fifteen, but for which his previous exercises at Bristol had in some measure prepared him. His text was 1 John i. 5. ‘God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.’ The enlarged and vivid conceptions of the youthful

\* Mr. Joseph Timms, several years a deacon of the baptist church at Kettering, where his father before him sustained the same office, during the presidency of the learned Dr. Gill.

preacher, his metaphysical acumen and powerful argumentation, on this profound and mysterious subject, excited the deepest interest, and afforded unequivocal proofs of his designation to the sacred office.

The friends at Clipstone were afterwards indulged with his early services, nearly as often as he visited his native place; but in consequence of his personal negligence and the numerous misadventures to which he was continually liable, they found it necessary to watch all his movements, till he was securely placed in the pulpit. In the immediate prospect of preaching he generally required to be left to his own meditations, for the space at least of half an hour; and it sometimes happened that the preacher could not be found when he was wanted, or that he had burned off the skirt of his coat unperceived, by sitting too near the fire, or had lost his hat, and could not appear until the losses and damages were in some sort repaired. These trifling incidents, affording amusement at the moment, were easily overlooked and soon forgotten, when once the blaze of eloquence was lighted up.

During the probationary period at Bristol he pursued his academical studies with great ardour and perseverance, and was remarkable for early rising; but having no regular plan of operation, nor deeming it necessary to make arrangements for his own convenience, his fellow students were not a little annoyed by his literary depredations.



On leaving the dormitory they found that in his haste he had carried off their paper and pens, inkstands and books, and sometimes even their clothes, till effectual means were interposed for their protection. Dr. Caleb Evans, entertaining a great partiality for his pupil, invited him in a morning to his private study, where every thing was provided for his accommodation, and thus terminated the predatory warfare.

At all times fond of daring exploits, his life was frequently exposed to great danger during the volatile period of childhood and youth. He would climb the loftiest trees, or plant his foot on some dangerous eminence, from which he sometimes fell with great violence, but was mercifully preserved from any serious accident. One of these exploits, during his academic career, was of a character so singular and romantic, and attended with such imminent peril, that it might have been deemed perfectly incredible, but for the undoubted authority on which it rests.

It having been customary to admit into the Academy at Bristol a limited number of Welsh students, whose different habits and odd construction of the English language often afforded diversion to the other inmates, it is said that our hero contrived to frighten one of them by descending the chimney of the room where he was sitting, and presenting himself to the retired and contemplative Welshman, covered with soot and dirt. The circumstance having been mentioned to

Mr. Hall nearly fifty years afterward, in the expectation that so improbable a statement would have met a direct denial, he immediately replied, "By no means: the tale is true enough, except that it was no part of my design to disturb the inoffensive Welshman, who was sufficiently alarmed, certainly, at my unexpected appearance through such an aperture. But having observed with what ease and celerity a Sweep would present himself at the chimney top, I was desirous of ascertaining by what means such an extraordinary feat was accomplished. Unfortunately, I began at the wrong end of the business. I ascended the roof of the building by a ladder, and then climbed outside the highest chimney, in order to descend through it to the bottom. The attempt nearly cost me my life. On entering the top of the chimney I slipped down several yards, was almost suffocated with dust and soot, and some severe contusions of the head and elbows were the consequence of this imprudent adventure." If the excruciating pain he endured throughout the greater part of life had not its origin in some unperceived injury of an early date, there can be little doubt but it was much encreased by the serious accidents to which he was continually liable, and might account for the different forms of affliction with which he was visited.

The eccentricity of his habits and manual exploits, during this period, was not more remarkable than the ebullition of his genius, and the unbound-

ed efforts of his wit. The appearance of vanity and conceit, or the obtrusion of an ignorant petulance, however disgusting to his feelings, did not suffice for the object of his censure; he would overwhelm by turns all his associates with torrents of sarcastic wit and raillery, which he found it so difficult to restrain. Aware however of the temptation to which his natural vivacity exposed him, and how incautiously his satire might wound the feelings of those whom he esteemed, he imposed a restriction upon his fancy, and passed upon himself an implied censure, in writing an admirable Essay, in which the evils and excesses of a satirical propensity are ably pointed out.

This short and interesting piece, entitled the "Character of Cleander," exposes with just severity that species of sarcasm especially, which arises from a disposition to detract from the excellencies of others on account of some minor defects, eagerly descried for the mere purpose of furnishing matter for ridicule and banter; a state of mind totally estranged, certainly, "from the delicacies of friendship, which generously hides the faults it cannot correct," and is equally at variance with the principles of true benevolence.

It is pretty evident however that besides the correction of his own foibles, the writer must have had principally in view some unfeeling critic, whose conduct it was his object to condemn; for with respect to himself, no one who knew him would admit that a single grain of malevolence



ever entered his constitution, whatever may be said of the shrewdness and severity of some of his repartees. He now determined it seems on laying aside “all the edged tools of eloquence and wit,” which he had brandished with so much power and playfulness, and to comport himself with a gravity and decorum becoming his present engagements and pursuits. In the latter part of life especially, when his feelings were more under the controul of religious principles, he was sparing in the use of satire, and preferred cultivating the tender and devout affections, both in himself and others, though it was impossible but that the sparklings of his wit and humour would sometimes escape him, in the course of an animated conversation; and whether serious or jocose, his sarcasms seldom failed to strike.

Towards the close of his second year at the academy, Mr. Hall spent the midsummer vacation at Arnsby; and not having been formally called to the work of the ministry, according to the general custom among dissenters at that time, his pious father deemed it necessary that he should be examined before the church for that purpose. Desirous also that his own conduct in this instance should appear to be uninfluenced by any undue partiality to his beloved son, and that satisfactory evidence should be given of his talents and piety, as indispensable to the sacred office, he carefully recorded the particulars of this solemn service, accompanied with a brief sketch of the early life

and experience of the individual now to be set apart to the ministry of the gospel.

The following Extract from the Church Book at Arnsby, in the hand-writing of the senior Mr. Hall, and given with his characteristic simplicity, will be read with no ordinary interest, as it furnishes an unquestionable testimony to the leading facts already mentioned.

*“ A short account of the Call of Robert Hall, junior, to the work of the Ministry, by the Church at Arnsby, Aug. 13th 1780.*

“ The said Robert Hall was born at Arnsby, May 2nd 1764; and was, even from his childhood, not only serious, and *given to secret prayer before he could speak plain*, but was always wholly inclined to the work of the ministry. He began to compose hymns before he was quite seven years old, and therein discovered marks of piety, deep thought and genius. Between eight and nine years he made several hymns, which were much admired by many, one of which was printed in the Gospel Magazine about that time. He wrote his thoughts on various religious subjects, and select portions of scripture. He was likewise possessed of an intense inclination for learning, and made such progress that the country master under whom he was, could not instruct him any farther. He was then sent to Northampton boardingschool, under the care of the Rev. John Rylard, where

he continued about a year and a half, and made great progress in latin and greek.

“ In October 1778 he went to the Academy at Bristol, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Evans ; and on Aug. 13th 1780 was sent out to the ministry by this church, being sixteen years and three months old. The manner in which the church obtained satisfaction with his abilities for the great work was, his speaking in his turn at conference meetings from various portions of scripture ; in which, and in prayer, he had borne a part for upwards of four years before ; and having when at home, at their request, frequently preached on Lord's day mornings, to their great satisfaction. They therefore earnestly and unanimously requested his being in a solemn manner set apart to public employ.

“ Accordingly, on the day aforesaid, he was examined by his father before the church, respecting his inclination, motives, and end, in reference to the ministry, and was likewise desired to make a declaration of his religious sentiments. All which being done, to the entire satisfaction of the church, they therefore set him apart by lifting up their right hands, and by solemn prayer.

“ His father then delivered a discourse to him, from 2 Tim. ii. 1. ‘ Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.’ Being thus sent forth, he preached in the afternoon from 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.—May the Lord bless him, and grant him great success !”

### SECTION III.

A. D. 1781—1787.

THE Bristol Education Society, of the baptist denomination, possessing funds for the purpose of sending students to the northern university, introduced Mr. Hall to King's College, Aberdeen, November 1781, in the seventeenth year of his age. During his residence in this seat of learning he prosecuted his studies with great assiduity and success, was brought into contact with many elevated minds, and some congenial spirits, which called forth his powers to the loftiest exercise. His talents and attainments were allowed to be such, that none of the collegians could be put in competition with him; while he was equally admired for the urbanity of his deportment, and the uniform consistency of his moral and religious conduct.

Towards the close of his fourth year he pronounced a Greek oration, which was heard with great applause, and followed with the honourary degree of A. M. The spot on which he stood to deliver this memoriter address, is still carefully pointed out to amateurs who visit the college,



and his fame still survives in the memory of some distinguished members of the university.

One of the most eminent of his fellow students at Aberdeen was the late Sir James Mackintosh, who admired his transcendent abilities, and held his character in the highest estimation. Devoted to very different pursuits, there was nevertheless a cordial attachment between them, each conceding to the other a preeminence which neither of them claimed or accepted for himself. The foundation of their union was mental greatness, attracting and being attracted, at different points of their orbit, while each in harmony with the other, irradiated the peculiar sphere assigned him.

Sir James was heard to remark, that during the two or three years he spent with Mr. Hall at Aberdeen, all the time, early and late, that could be spared from college exercises, was occupied in one continued series of severe and animated argumentation, on morals and metaphysics, on the doctrines and evidences of christianity; and that he derived from these discussions more satisfactory information than from all the books he had ever read upon the same subjects. And in a letter written to Mr. Hall many years afterward, Sir James acknowledged that, “on the most impartial survey of his early life he could see nothing which so much tended to excite and invigorate the understanding, to direct it towards high and perhaps scarcely accessible objects, as his intimacy with his honoured friend.”

After Mr. Hall had been at college about a year and a half, he returned to Bristol to spend the summer recess of 1783, and went back to Aberdeen in the following autumn. The church at Broadmead, anxious to secure his services, followed him with a pressing invitation to become the colleague of Dr. Caleb Evans; but not having yet attained his twentieth year, his diffidence scarcely permitted him to accede to their wishes. He very naturally pleaded for a longer probation, but at the same time resigned himself to their counsel and direction. The following reply, written on this occasion, will be found to contain those sentiments of humble and affectionate piety which so eminently adorned his general character.

TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL.

*Old Aberdeen, King's College,  
Dec. 4th 1783.*

Dear and honoured Brethren,

I duly received your affectionate letter, in which you express a desire of engaging my labours as an assistant minister. Your request does me honour, and confers upon me an obligation which no efforts of mine can fully discharge. Yet, young and inexperienced as I am, I tremble to think of engaging in so arduous a work, especially in a situation where all my incapacity will be doubly felt. I cannot but think a few years would be necessary to enable me to gratify the lowest expectation. To plunge into the midst of life at so tender an age, with so little experience, and so small a stock of knowledge, almost terrifies me. Your candid judgment of my past services, I acknow-



ledge with a mixture of pleasure and surprise ; pleased to obtain the approbation of the wise and good, and surprised that I have in any measure obtained it ; but which I can attribute to nothing but that kindness and forbearance which have ever strongly marked your conduct.

A retired and private sphere would indeed be more on a level with my abilities, and congenial with my temper ; yet I would willingly sacrifice my private inclinations to more important views, and lose sight of myself, if I could benefit others. My reluctance therefore to obey your call arises merely from a feeling of my weakness, and a secret fear lest you should hereafter have occasion to repent it. If you could have dispensed with my labours till the final close of my studies, I might then have hoped to have been more able to serve you ; but if not, I submit. Let me crave your prayers, that as my day my strength may be.

Your welfare, honoured brethren, will ever lie near my heart. Numberless reflections concur with a thousand tender recollections of past kindness to keep it there ; but these are not my only inducements to embrace your proposals. It is an additional pleasure to me, when I recollect with whom I have the honour to be connected,—with one whom I most sincerely reverence, and to whom I am bound by every tie of affection and gratitude. I hope I undertake this work in the fear of God, and look forward to that awful day when all these solemn transactions shall be reviewed, and every secret motive that entered into them will be brought to light.

Wishing you, dear brethren, all prosperity, and that you may be stedfast in that day,

I subscribe myself yours,

ROBERT HALL, Jun.

It was at length agreed, that at the end of another session Mr. Hall should again visit Bristol, and then return to complete his course at Aberdeen. In the spring of 1784 his health had suffered considerably from intense application to college duties, and his almost total seclusion from society, after his friend Sir James had left the university. On his arrival from the north he retired immediately to his native village, in the hope of being benefited by a change of air. While at Arnsby he fell ill of the measles, had the disorder in its worst possible form, and his life was despaired of for several days. To the effects of this epidemic he attributed the peculiar weakness of his voice, and the disorder which gradually accumulated in his chest, though it has since been ascertained that his chest was not naturally formed for stronger or deeper tones than those he actually possessed.

His health being somewhat reestablished he attended a ministers' meeting at Walgrave in the month of May, where he delivered an admirable discourse from the words of Solomon: 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Mr. Fuller heard this discourse with so much pleasure that he talked about it for sometime afterwards, and could not be satisfied till he had tried his hand upon the same subject, to see whether the rock would send forth its streams as it had done when smitten by the rod of Moses.

As far as can be ascertained his admirable essay on "Philosophy and Poetry" was composed dur-

ing this interval, if not at an earlier date. The essay illustrates and explains with great felicity the different genius and opposite tendency of philosophy and poetry; the one the language of reason, the other of the passions; and closes with a masterly comparison of Homer and Milton, conceding to the Grecian a larger portion of poetic fire and greater fervour of description, but claiming for the English bard an unrivalled degree of sublimity and grandeur of conception. This appears to be the only fugitive piece to which the author's name was affixed; and at the solicitation of the editor, he permitted it to appear in one of the later *Annals*.

Having completed his fourth year at the northern university, Mr. Hall returned to Bristol in the spring of 1785, to commence his stated labours at Broadmead, in conjunction with Dr. Caleb Evans, the pastor of the church. This auspicious connection afforded much satisfaction to all parties, who anticipated many years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity. Mr. Hall's brilliant abilities, aided by all the fire and energy of youth, excited very general attention, and the place of worship was often crowded to excess. Among his occasional hearers were several eminent clergymen, and persons of the highest distinction in the city and neighbourhood.

Mr. Hall likewise assisted in the classical department of the academy, which had been assigned

to Mr. Newton, but who was now in a declining state of health, and died a little while afterwards, when Mr. Hall succeeded to the office, which he filled with great vigour and success. His pupils were exceedingly attached to him, were delighted with the affability of his deportment, and his evident devotedness to their interest. Some of them could never forget an incident which occurred at this distant period, at once illustrative of his sarcastic humour, and of the manner in which he exercised authority. An unhappy man, who had incurred the extreme penalty of the law, was left for execution at Bristol. The circumstances of the case were such as excited very general sympathy, and some of the students were desirous of witnessing the infliction of the awful sentence. Mr. Hall expressed much surprise at so extraordinary a request, and remonstrated on its impropriety. The applicants urged that the unfortunate man had given signs of late repentance, and was expected to deliver an appropriate address; they therefore wished to be present at his exit. The tutor replied, Certainly, gentlemen, *that* is a most important consideration, and I therefore allow you to go, that you may learn from his example how to conduct yourselves on such an occasion.

In addition to the two minor pieces already noticed, Mr. Hall amused himself in writing a "Reverie," on the Miseries of Love, probably soon after he had begun to taste some of the 'miseries' of disappointment. This elegant effusion describes



the unhappy effects of love on the whole tribe of philosophers and astronomers, on men of business, and the numerous train of disappointed lovers, all of whom unite in a petition to the celestial powers for the removal of the goddess from the earth. The effects of her departure are pourtrayed in glowing language, with an invocation for her return, to bless once more the desolate abodes of men.—This singularly interesting piece was not written with a view to its being published, but a few friends having obtained a sight of it took care to copy it for private circulation, and its first appearance in print was in a provincial newspaper, in the year 1787, under the signature of Leptos.

In order to understand the earlier part of Mr. Hall's history it is necessary to observe, that when he entered upon his public ministry, the state of christian society was comparatively tranquil, and had not been agitated by any very important controversy; among dissenters there was a general concurrence in orthodox opinions, whatever might be said of the prevalence of genuine piety. Socinianism had but few adherents, and had grown up nearly unperceived, out of the congenial soil of Arianism and Infidelity; but it found at last an able champion in Dr. Priestley, the boldness of whose religious speculations roused the general torpor, and spread alarm in the camp of Israel. Not content with defensive operations,

he commenced a direct attack on the whole system of orthodoxy, which he denounced as the very "Corruptions of Christianity." The redoubtable Dr. Horsley, a biblical scholar of great eminence, undertook a successful refutation of the charge, and was rewarded with the bishopric of St. Asaph. Mr. Hall, though he took no direct part in the controversy, could not be expected to be an indifferent spectator; he watched the proceedings on both sides with intense interest, and carefully examined the inordinate pretensions of Dr. Priestley. Inclined at no time in the smallest degree to the distinguishing tenets of Socinianism, for in no man did they ever meet with a more decided adversary, he nevertheless entertained a high opinion of the talents and integrity of its fearless advocate; and sometimes in conversation admitted that he could readily concede one point, not necessarily connected with socinianism, though at that time making a prominent part of it, and thought that the doctrine of materiality might be defended on philosophical principles.

During this partial and transient obliquity he was once on a visit at Arnsby; and the author of these pages knowing the strong aversion of his excellent father, in reference to these speculations, contrived to bring the parties into contact on the materiality of the human soul, and the consequent nonexistence of an intermediate state. The senior Mr. Hall was a profound thinker, and by his subtilty in argument seldom failed to confute or embarrass



the keenest disputant ; but in the present severe contest the odds were greatly against him. The venerable senior, with truth on his side, employed the whole force of his acumen in vain ; he heaped argument upon argument, only to be repelled and overthrown by the ingenious sophistry of one who inherited all his gigantic faculties, with the superior advantages of a polished education. With ease and dexterity he combated every objection, till resistance was wholly unavailing. The perplexed and discomfited senior terminated the rapid and highly animated dispute by the interposition of parental authority, accompanied with a solemn admonition and fervent hope, that the Lord would lead him into the truth as it is in Jesus, and preserve him from every approach to the vortex of socinianism. Robert left the room in a state of great agitation. The pious father, deeply affected, then said to his friend who brought on and witnessed the debate, “ Sir, I must beg of you never to lead me into another controversy with my son Robert ; for to tell you the truth, though I wish him not to know it, he is the only person I am acquainted with that I should dread to meet in argument.”

Mr. Robert Hall did not long entertain the notion of materiality ; and while entertained it was rather as a matter of speculation and dispute, than of sober and serious belief ; at any rate it made no part of his theological creed, nor did it find any place in his pulpit discourses. More suspicion and

alarm was evidently excited than the importance of the case justified. His admiration of the learning and talents of Dr. Priestley, and his friendly intercourse with several of the socinian party, did not arise, as some imagined, from any congeniality of religious sentiment or feeling, but from a coincidence of opinion remotely connected with religious interests, and more immediately with those of civil society. He disapproved, as he said, the theological tenets of Dr. Price, who was not a Socinian, but an Arian; at the same time he felt no hesitation in affirming, "that a more ardent and enlightened friend of his country never lived, than that venerable patriarch of freedom;" whom Mr. Pitt himself frequently consulted on subjects of finance, and previously to his political apostasy, admired. And though Dr. Priestley was an avowed Socinian, Mr. Hall respected him for his private virtues, for his scientific acquirements, his patriotic and decided attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty. He afterwards sympathised with him as the victim of intolerance.

In consequence of his having cherished these benevolent and honourable feelings, some of the more refined socinians eagerly sought his acquaintance, and seemed to calculate on his becoming in time their advocate, though nothing had brought him into contact but the love of intelligent society and of free discussion. Being one day in company with a party of this description, occasion was given for dispelling this delusion. An unguarded

expression having escaped him in conversation, one of them took the liberty of tapping him on the shoulder and saying, “We shall have *you* amongst us soon, I hope, sir.” Startled and offended at this unseasonable anticipation, Mr. Hall quickly replied, “*Me* amongst you sir—*me* amongst you! Why, I should deserve to be tied to the tail of the great red dragon, and whipped round the nethermost regions to all eternity!”

In the early part of his ministry however he was strongly inclined to Arminianism, on account, as he said, of its practical tendency, admitting withal, that the Calvinistic system, in a speculative point of view, was in some respects more satisfactory and consistent with itself. He had seen in his own denomination especially, the moral desolation produced by the long prevalence of Hypercalvinism, which began about this time to be exploded by the senior Mr. Hall, in his valuable “*Help to Zion’s Travellers*,” a work which has passed through several editions; and afterwards by the more elaborate treatises of Mr. Fuller, in reply to various opponents. The Arminianism of Mr. Hall however was never complete; it was chiefly confined to two or three points, confessedly of some importance, but did not extend to an entire adoption of the system. He demurred to the doctrine of original sin, and invincible depravity; to the final perseverance of all the regenerate, while with Baxter he admitted the perseverance of

all the elect. Though not the advocate of universal grace, he maintained that the influence of the Holy Spirit was indefinitely promised, and might be obtained in answer to the prayers of the unregenerate, if offered up with fervour and sincerity. At the same time, though he believed in this efficacious influence, he more than doubted the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, and rather maintained the duality of the divine nature, than cordially embraced the trinitarian hypothesis.

These views were entertained for some years, but without making them a subject of public controversy, or giving them any prominence in his ministry. He cordially admitted the efficacy of the atonement, contending that its universality was the true ground of indefinite invitations, that the obligations of faith were coextensive with the promulgation of the gospel, and that 'men,' irrespective of their moral condition, 'ought always to pray and not to faint.' Mr. Fuller, and other intelligent Calvinists, could not perceive that unbelieving prayer was anywhere commanded, or could be acceptable in the sight of God. They therefore gave precedence to regeneration in their system of theology, and to faith in their practical exhortations; neither considering nor admitting that prayer, encouraged by a reverential regard to the sacred scriptures, might be the germinating principle, or the incipient state of faith and regeneration, and that it is quite as consistent to



exhort men to pray for mercy, as to believe in Christ for salvation.

In a state of abeyance with the antagonist systems, he was claimed and disowned by both parties, and suffered unmerited suspicion and obloquy for the unsoundness of his creed. He was anxious to find a medium between what he termed “the rigidity of Calvinism and the laxness of Arminianism, and a solution of the grand difficulty—the consistency between general offers and invitations, and the speciality of divine grace”—a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.

The anti-systematic views entertained at this period were not very cordially received by that part of the congregation, who believed all the five points to be alike essential; and it was not therefore to be expected that they would continue to approve a ministry which dealt so little in the logomachy of commonly-received opinions. Among the more rigid a secret disaffection was gradually engendered, and the variegated appearance of the preacher’s creed became as offensive as Joseph’s coat of many colours. Alarmed at the boldness of his innovations, and the lawless exposure of truth and error, they imagined his speculations would lead him far beyond all prescription, and that he would go on to range

“Through provinces of thought yet unexplored,”

where it would be as dangerous to follow as to venture among the ghosts and apparitions of departed days.



Some of the pious people began to leave Broadmead, others threatened to withdraw. Some recollected with dismal surmises, that in some former instances during his academical career, they had seen him walking through the city without his hat, or like Professor Leslie, going to meet a genteel party with only half a shirt upon his back, large holes in his stockings, worn inside out, the calf drawn down to supply the place of a departed heel, and his bare toes protruding through his shoes; and sometimes, to this superlative costume was added, an unseemly pair of indescribables, which in the haste of dressing had been unwittingly taken for his own. When reminded of these and similar instances of personal neglect, he usually replied that such trifles were not worthy of any notice. And though these habits were now in great measure corrected, other singularities, not in perfect accordance with the order and exactitude expected of a tutor, occasionally displayed themselves in his academical department, to the no small annoyance of the president; while some of the friends and subscribers to the institution, beginning to be filled with apprehension, intimated an intention of withdrawing their patronage and support.

But a person must be very imperfectly acquainted with Mr. Hall's moral and intellectual constitution, with the blandness of his manners and the volatility of his genius, who can see in any of these circumstances a departure from or an indifference to evangelical truth, or that he had then

but faint and inadequate conceptions of the great doctrines of the gospel. That he did not dwell so much on these points as some wished, he himself admitted, and gave as a reason that his respectable colleague fully occupied this foreground; he therefore deemed it expedient to give to his ministrations a wider latitude, embracing a greater variety of topics, for which as he said "he should offer no apology." The fact also is undeniable, that his hearers did not accuse him of any heretical opinion, did not know that he entertained any, except as it was disclosed in private conversation; for whatever were his speculative singularities, they were speculative only, and had no perceptible influence on his religious and devotional feelings. Meanwhile Dr. Evans vouched for his orthodoxy on every occasion, and proclaimed it to all his connections, to appease the apprehensions which an insidious opposition had excited.

No doubt, in those days of hypercalvinism, when very few of the baptist auditories would admit of any thing like indiscriminate exhortation, there was something in the unfettered and discursive ministry of Mr. Hall that did not exactly quadrate with what some accounted orthodoxy; and possibly, the rigidity he had to encounter, led to the explosion of all creeds and systems; and springing vigorously forward in the strength of his youth he upset the tables of orthodoxy, and the seats of them that sold doves, till he found himself precipitated on the verge of some opposite ex-

treme. Must he therefore be set down as a novice but half initiated; or would it be doing justice to his character to construe these impatient ebullitions and overflowings of the heart, into a dereliction of the truth?

To attempt to build up such a supposition by an appeal to his subsequent humiliations and concessions, the humiliations and concessions of a man habitually penetrated with a sense of his own unworthiness, and who found his greatest happiness in lying prostrate in the dust before God, would betray a want of candour and discernment which few would be anxious to exhibit. For in what period of his life did he not cherish a habit of self-depreciation; in what period of his life did he not mourn over his own defects, and sink into annihilation on a review of his best performances. One document however still remains, of much higher authority than the notes and recollections of anonymous hearers, and which proves beyond a doubt that Mr. Hall's sentiments were at this period decidedly evangelical, on all the great points of christian doctrine.

In 1787, rather more than two years after he was settled at Bristol, and only a little while before the uneasiness arose in the congregation, he was requested, in consequence of his connection with Broadmead, to write the Circular Letter, to be issued by the Baptist churches and ministers of the Western Association. Mr. Hall very reluctantly complied, and deferred the execution till the time

had nearly arrived for its appearance in print. He chose for his subject the “Excellence of the Christian dispensation.” He had sketched a very few lines only in the course of the year; the manuscript, if such it might be called, was lost and found several times, purloined no doubt as a curiosity; till at length the eccentric author had to atone for his long neglect, by writing a considerable part of his intended Circular at an Inn upon the road, while travelling to the association.

The tract was well received by his brethren in the ministry, all orthodox men, and has since had an extensive circulation. Being his maiden essay, the first he wrote on a religious subject, it contains of course the avowed sentiments with which he entered upon his pulpit labours; and the reader will perceive from a few extracts, how comprehensive and energetic were the views he entertained of the great scheme of human redemption, and how unfounded the suspicions of his holding a latitudinarian creed.

After a few introductory remarks on the comparative obscurity of the Jewish economy on the subject of salvation, the author proceeds—“Herein then appears the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation; in the midst of this darkness it rises like the sun in its strength, and all these gloomy shades melt away and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares,



it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity ; who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works. It raises no hopes within, but what are built upon the promise and the oath of Him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who is God as well as man ; in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion ; whilst at the same moment, the law of God received more honour than it could have done by the obedience and death of all his creatures. ' Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' In the dispensation of his grace he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that if we love him we may be assured he will freely forgive us all things. Access to God is now open at all times, and from all places ; and to such as sincerely ask it, he has promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it *just* for him to forgive sin ; and whenever we are led to repent of and forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in our forgiveness. Whilst we contemplate the gospel, consolation pours itself in on every side, and refreshes our inmost souls. It gives us the prospect of our sins being pardoned, our prayers accepted, our very afflictions turned into blessings, and our existence prolonged to an endless duration.



We see Christianity as yet but in its infancy ; it has not reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present it is only as a grain of mustard seed, and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop ; but be assured it is of God's own righthand planting, and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the river, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it, the hungry will partake of its fruits, and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

“ Those who profess the name of Jesus will delight in contemplating the encrease and grandeur of his kingdom, and their expectations will not deceive them. ‘ He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.’ The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God himself, and which will continue to move and to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessedness will descend, and its influence will be felt to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects, and the accomplishment of its purposes : it points forward to eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth, as its judge and ruler ; will send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds of heaven. He will

abolish sin and death, will place the righteous for ever in the presence of his God and their God, of his Father and their Father.

“ If our religion be such as we have attempted briefly to describe, ‘ What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ? ’ We are conscious that a mere general belief of the christian revelation will not purify the heart, nor regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of christianity, and afterwards suffer them to slide out of our minds, without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back on the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects, than by their weight and importance ; and that habit has more force in forming our characters than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is that the world, by continually pressing on our senses and being open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart. How then must we correct this influence, and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity. Let us make them familiar to our minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of our thoughts, retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and our own souls. In these solemn moments, nature, and the shifting scenes of it, will retire from our view, and we shall feel ourselves alone with God. We shall walk as

in his sight, we shall stand as it were at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour. We shall estimate human life, and the worth of it, not by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. We shall see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter; its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantments be dissolved. It is much however, if faith do not upon such occasions draw aside the veil which rests upon futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men, and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes. They have already entered the rest which remained for them, they have ‘come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to God the judge of all.’ From these seasons of retirement and religious meditation, we shall return to the active scenes of life with greater advantage. From the presence of God we shall come forth with our passions more composed, our thoughts better regulated, and our hearts more steady and pure. Let us not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them; for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have long been shed; so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.”

## SECTION IV.

A. D. 1788—1790.

THE uneasiness which had manifested itself in the Bristol congregation, continued and encreased for the next two years, with very little hope of returning tranquility. A party was forming in the church, under an unseen and unsuspected influence ; the personal friendship of the pastor and assistant was placed in imminent jeopardy, and a crisis seemed rapidly approaching, while Mr. Hall's friends were prepared for any sacrifice rather than give him up.

The Rev. Robert Robinson, a man of preeminent abilities, pastor of the baptist congregation at Cambridge, died in June 1790 ; and the people being apprised of the misunderstanding existing at Bristol, very naturally expected to find in that quarter a suitable successor. Mr. Hall was requested to pay them a visit, and he went in the following September. After fulfilling this limited engagement, he received a warm and unanimous invitation for the renewal of his services. On his return to Bristol he consulted with his friends, and particularly with his reverend colleague, as to the



course it would be most expedient to pursue. The Cambridge congregation presented at that time no alluring aspect, their religious sentiments being lax and various ; but as they interposed no obstacle to free discussion, or an unlimited avowal of belief, there was no danger at least of incurring an unfounded charge of the want of orthodoxy.

Dr. Evans, hoping that the proposed removal would restore tranquility to his own congregation, and open to Mr. Hall an extensive and important field of usefulness, advised his compliance with the invitation. To give it the utmost appearance of frankness, the doctor laid his hand upon his heart and assured him, that ‘Caleb Evans’ was anxious for his continuance, but that neither the ‘Pastor’ of Broadmead nor the ‘President’ of the academy concurred in that opinion. Mr. Hall very readily admitted this delicate distinction, and made up his mind to remove to Cambridge as soon as convenient.

This resolution very soon led to the resignation of his charge at Bristol, and now he takes the opportunity of expressing his thoughts freely on the subject of the late agitation, and what his feelings were respecting those who had unceasingly endeavoured to traduce his religious reputation, and whom nothing could satisfy but an exact cubical system. Hitherto he had had no misunderstanding with his worthy colleague, in whose honour and fidelity he had placed unlimited confidence, and is careful therefore to mention him in



terms of high esteem, with the view of silencing those suspicions which some of his friends had entertained, and had endeavoured unsuccessfully to infuse into his mind, though in the sequel he thought he saw reason to alter his opinion. The following is the letter which on this occasion he addressed

TO THE CHURCH AT BROADMEAD.

*Gloucester street, Nov. 11th 1790.*

My dear Brethren,

I take this opportunity of informing you, that I am come to a determination of leaving you. The reasons of this resolution I do not think it necessary to detail, farther than in general to remark, that my opinions on some points of religious and moral speculation are different from those professed by this society, and that I wish to be connected with a congregation in which I shall meet with sentiments more congenial with my own, and where I shall not be in danger of falling into the arts of collision, or of incurring the vexations of honesty.

I have always endeavoured to avoid the mixing of private passions with religious conduct. I rest no blame upon any, for I know of none that exists. Our sentiments do not depend upon our will, and there are many ill satisfied with my public ministry whom I highly esteem. Your personal attachment I have always valued, but I have never been elated with your applause; and now that I see a propriety

in a separation, I do not feel myself at all dejected, degraded, or displeased, by the disapprobation of many of you. For my conduct in the ministry I make no apology. I have adopted that strain of preaching, and selected those topics, which I thought most conducive to your good, forming my own opinions without fear or controul, and commending myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The calm recollection of this is my only support, and I need no other.

I hope none of you will suspect that your worthy pastor has influenced my determination by any improper interference of his, when I assure you that his friendship for me has continued through every vicissitude unshaken; and that his conduct, particularly in this business, through every part of it, not only meets my approbation, but merits my applause. I hope my separation from you will be followed by many happy and no unpleasant consequences; that you may be furnished with a successor, in whom you may cordially unite, and that a society, hitherto so respectable and harmonious, may continue to enjoy to a distant period, unmolested by the animosity of parties, the blessings of religion and the consolations of peace. These are the prayers of your brother in the Lord,

ROBERT HALL.

This calm and dignified address did not fail to produce a powerful effect, not only on the imme-

diate friends of the writer, but also on a majority of the church in Broadmead, which now manifested considerable reluctance in parting with their junior minister. Not a hand was lifted up against him, all opposition was silenced, and a glow of admiration pervaded the assembly. Some required that he should be re-invited, and his services if possible retained. For the satisfaction of others a deputation was appointed to wait on Mr. Hall, requesting an explicit statement of that difference of sentiment, of which they were not fully aware, but which he had mentioned as one of the reasons for relinquishing his charge. When previously appealed to by captious individuals, he disdained to make any confessions, and referred them to his public ministry. Now that the connection is in effect dissolved he readily complied with the request of the deputation, and with great candour delivered in writing his views of certain points of doctrine, accompanied with an assurance that he could not accept any invitation to continue among them, as he held himself engaged to the people at Cambridge for six months.

In this statement he acknowledged, that in the strict sense of the term he was not a Calvinist. He did not maintain the federal headship of Adam, or the penal imputation of sin to his posterity, but considered *guilt* to be wholly personal, and that we are liable to condemnation only for our own actions. He avowed himself a firm believer in the proper deity of Christ, in the efficacy of his

atonement, and that it is the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, to the exclusion of all works; in the necessity of divine influence to renew and sanctify the mind, in order to our becoming real christians. And though he did not admit the Calvinistic construction of the doctrine of election and reprobation, he believed in the doctrine of divine decrees, and that all who are finally saved were predestinated to eternal life.

On the subject of *materiality* he stated his opinion to be, that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter, and that after death he ceases to be conscious until the resurrection; adding that he had always considered this as a mere metaphysical speculation, and had never introduced it in preaching.

His views of BAPTISM at this period, which underwent only a slight modification in after life, are best given in his own words, especially as nothing occurs on this subject in any other part of his writings.

“On this point,” he remarked, “much mistake, much misrepresentation has taken place; and on this account I trust you will excuse my dwelling upon it a little more particularly than its importance in other respects might seem to justify. It has been held out to the world by some, that I am not a baptist. I am, both in respect to the subject and to the mode of this institution, *a baptist*. To apply this ordinance to infants, appears to me a



perversion of the intention of the sacred institution. The primitive, the regular and proper mode of administration, I take to be *immersion*. Still it appears to me that sprinkling, though an innovation, does not deprive baptism of its essential validity, so as to put the person that has been sprinkled *in adult age* upon a footing with the unbaptised. The whole of my sentiments amounts to this: I would not myself baptise in any other manner than by immersion, because I look upon immersion as the ancient mode; that it best represents the meaning of the original term employed, and the substantial import of this institution; and because I should think it right to guard against a spirit of innovation, which in positive rites is always dangerous and progressive; but I should not think myself authorised to rebaptise any one who has been sprinkled in adult age. I shall only remark, in addition to what I have already said upon this point, that if it be a sufficient objection to my union with a baptist congregation; then, as all christendom is composed of baptists or pedobaptists, it amounts to my exclusion, as a minister, from every christian society throughout the whole earth; an interdict equally absurd and inhuman, founded upon a conduct merely negative, in chimerical situations seldom or never likely to occur."

When this avowal of his sentiments was read before the church, accompanied with a declaration that he could not renew the connection, a vote of



thanks was passed for his obliging and candid statement. The attachment of the congregation was expressed in the warmest terms, nearly all seemed anxious to throw into oblivion their past dissensions, for the purpose of preventing a separation. Meanwhile a few endeavoured to put an unfavourable construction upon his sentiments, to magnify a philosophical subtilty into a huge and frightful heresy; and their efforts to effect a rupture were unremitting. To silence the solicitations of the people, Mr. Hall's refusal to continue his services was strongly urged; hints were also given that if his departure were prevented, the pastor would resign. A resolution was accordingly precipitated at an early meeting, that as Mr. Hall had actually engaged himself to another society, though only for six months, his connection with the church at Broadmead was dissolved.

Though Mr. Hall had for some time resisted the suspicions entertained by his friends, and also by his venerable father, who was consulted on this occasion, he at length imbibed them, and was fully persuaded that the present measures arose out of a premeditated scheme to effect his removal from Bristol; a purpose which he could certainly have defeated, had he allowed himself to be governed by motives which too frequently operate in such cases. But when such an idea was suggested to him, his mind instantly recoiled, and with unaffected modesty he declared, "Were my talents for popularity as great as they <sup>are</sup> small, and I could

draw the whole congregation after me, I should blush at the thought of such conduct."

New circumstances were afterwards discovered, tending to confirm the suspicions already entertained, and the interference of friends to restore harmony was employed in vain; not from any feeling of implacability, but from a settled conviction that an underplot actually existed, under an appearance of candour and friendship. Unable to rid himself of this conviction, which he very reluctantly received, Mr. Hall determined, after reviewing the whole of the transactions, to communicate his thoughts unreservedly upon the subject. The letter written on this occasion contains some acrimonious expressions, which the writer himself would not have repeated; but as some reflections on his character have been circulated in certain quarters, by those who took only a partial or distorted view of the subject, it is no more than just to give Mr. Hall's own statement in the letter referred to, omitting only such parts as contain unpleasant personalities.

MR. HALL TO DR. CALEB EVANS.

*Bristol, Dec. 4th 1790.*

Dear Sir,

While the elements of bodies are fermenting it is not easy to discover the principles of which they are mixed, but when they are settled into repose we may contemplate them with more satisfaction. A candid and impartial review of the

recent transactions relating to my removal from Bristol has excited unpleasing sensations of a description difficult to denominate, but which I beg leave to explain to you in their fullest extent.

You will remember that after the first conversation we had upon the subject, I expressed my inclination to leave Bristol, on account of the dissatisfaction of the people, and my station in the academy, without having the least reason to imagine any more remote or hidden considerations influenced your wishes. Since that period we have had two meetings of the church, in which, as you yourself have confessed, the aspect of things has much varied. A very large majority of the church appeared to lament my departure, the disaffected are silent and passive. In the first of these meetings, amidst, I am informed, the tears and lamentations of the far greater part of the society, every thing was hurried forward with the utmost precipitation, and closed with the murmuring disapprobation and deep resentments of the assembly. On the sabbath day you read the letter of dismissal, which Mr. H. requested to have deferred, and that the church should come to a resolution of expressing their attachment, by desiring me to revoke my determination. This motion, natural to the occasion, and certainly most calm and pacific, was received by you with the utmost acrimony. . . . was execrated as unwise and tending to sedition, covered with menaces of resignation ; till, intimidated by so much turbulence, the motion was withdrawn.

You pleaded indeed that my determination was unalterable, for that you had asked me that very morning whether my mind had undergone any alteration, and that I assured you it had not. But as I have since told you, how could I be mean enough to throw myself back again upon the mercy of the people, and beg them to request my stay? Your precipitate manner in putting the question, just as I was coming down from the pulpit, convinces me that it was intended merely as a dernier resort, against the solicitations of the people. If your sole view had been to prevent the dividing of the church upon a point already settled; why those insinuations respecting my sentiments? Why declare that there were reasons which rendered my departure necessary? All this could never have been said, but from an apprehension that the request of the people might induce my compliance. Your repugnance to my continuance, and the efforts you have employed to prevent it, have been exactly proportionate to the eagerness of my friends to retain me. And it is a fact not a little remarkable, that you are [almost] the only person, at all attached to my person or ministry, who wishes my removal. There must be some peculiar reason for a conduct thus singular, and your ardour to remove me seems to grow with the obstacles attending it.

After a few months our second correspondence took place, and then I divulged my intention of leaving Bristol, with which you seemed pleased, for reasons which I thought at that time I under-



stood, and approved, but find I cannot now at all comprehend. The disaffection of the people then ran the highest ; but high as it was you then declared that the congregation stood distinct and separate from the academy, and that you would support me through every opposition. Now that the congregation in general express the warmest attachment, that very congregation has become the chief objection. Your connection with me in the academy formerly depressed you, on account of my not having the confidence of the subscribers. My friends have now proposed I should decline the academy : and you say, “ If you do, I will resign.” Formerly you blamed me for divulging my sentiments on materialism, even in private circles ; you remonstrated on the dangerous consequences of circulating among the common people, tenets which will be but imperfectly understood. Now it has become proper and necessary to publish them in the hearing of the whole congregation. You profess yourself a Calvinist. I do not. But this difference of sentiment is of no importance in your estimation. It might be thought strange that a Calvinist should hold his religious system as nothing, whilst a philosophical subtilty is swelled to such importance. But my wonder vanishes when I recollect, that to serve different purposes from those that are now stirring, you justified my orthodoxy in too many places, and in too large an extent, ever to be forgotten.

After all, I do not suspect the goodness of your



general character ; but the grounds of your conduct in this business are covered from my eyes, and from those of most others by an impenetrable mystery.....

You have done nothing inconsistent with personal friendship, but you have done too much ever to permit us to act together as colleagues with unanimity and confidence. Under the strongest professions of personal attachment, in which you are certainly sincere, induced by reasons I cannot penetrate, you have thrown your whole weight into the scale of the disaffected, have crushed every hope of my continuance, and in my ministerial capacity have stood out as my last and almost only opposer. In all these transactions a plain path lay open before you ; but seduced by the inveterate love of rule, you choose rather to purchase lasting resentments by doing every thing, than secure your repose by doing nothing.

Yours, &c.

ROBERT HALL.

Nine days after the date of this letter, an interview took place between Dr. Evans, Mr. Hall, and four of their friends, in the hope of adjusting the matter in dispute. Mr. Hall opened his complaints by reading and delivering the above letter. The doctor complained of being met by a statement elaborately written, a copy of which had not been previously furnished him, and it could not be expected that he was then fully prepared to answer

it. His friends considered the severe reflections on his conduct in this matter to be unfounded and unjust; the friends of the other party maintained that their severity consisted wholly in their being just and true. In the issue Dr. Evans distinctly and solemnly denied that he had ever entertained any premeditated scheme for removing Mr. Hall from Bristol, or that he had been actuated by any improper influence in the part he had taken;—a declaration which Mr. Hall, unhappily, was unable to admit, and thus terminated the intercourse and the friendship which had so long subsisted between them.

Dr. Evans was a very amiable and excellent man, and had strong claims on the grateful esteem of his assistant; but in this instance he evidently miscalculated the degree of influence which he himself possessed, the weight of talent with which he had to contend, and the effects which must follow on being brought into collision with such a man as Robert Hall. Throughout the whole of this business he seems to have trusted more to the superiority of his station, than to the strict propriety of the conduct he had to defend, which created a general suspicion that the growing popularity of his compeer was the sole ground of his opposition. With all the respect due to seniority there is a point at which it must terminate, when it can no longer be exercised without a prostrate and abject submission. Before Mr. Hall had himself reached the age of his worthy colleague he culti-

vated an affectionate esteem for his junior brethren, and appeared at all times desirous of forgetting his own superiority, and of joining in the commendation and applause awarded to his contemporaries.

The agitation so long continued in the congregation at Broadmead, was not the only affliction Mr. Hall had to contend with ; there was another ingredient in the cup, which gave a pungency to its bitterness. Besides the vexations of unfounded prejudice, he had at the same time to sustain a trial of heart and intellect to which he found himself unequal, and which rendered a change of scene highly necessary. Unable to resist the influence of a passion which he has truly designated ‘the mistress of the soul,’ he became its victim, and fell a prey to all the miseries of unrequited love. By the absorption of his feelings the discharge of official duties was either interrupted or rendered irksome, and little was left him but anguish and regret. Numerous eccentricities, which either annoyed or were deplored by others, had no doubt their origin in this unfortunate circumstance, which was to him the source of much disquietude for years afterwards.

The object of his tender solicitude is said to have been a lady of some accomplishments, a relation of the celebrated Miss Steele, so well known by her devotional Hymns and other poetical compositions, which were collected and published in three volumes, by Dr. Caleb Evans. The family ancestor

was a Mr. Steele, pastor of the baptist church at Boughton in Wiltshire. Living in the beginning of the last century, when the act of toleration was scarcely sufficient to afford protection from the rude insults of the populace, this gentleman was frequently interrupted in the exercise of his ministry, and displayed on one occasion a singular instance of heroism. His house was entered by two dashing young men, with whips in their hands, thinking to amuse themselves with inflicting a few stripes on the sturdy nonconformist. Mr. Steele being a powerful athletic man, and perceiving their design, he placed his back against the wall, and when his assailants came forward he grasped them by the collar, one in each hand, and brought their empty heads into contact with such violence that they soon begged to be released, and were glad to make a precipitate retreat.

The lady alluded to appears to have received the attentions of her unfortunate admirer only for the purpose of rendering him the victim of caprice, and eventually preferred an alliance with property and influence to all the ardour, all the gracefulness, and all the mental attractions of the unrivaled Robert Hall, but recollected 'ever after with no small degree of complacency the conquest she had achieved. The peculiar sensibility and highly honourable feelings of the disappointed and injured party, added a poignancy to the grief and chagrin which no ordinary mind could well appreciate, though as generally happens, it is from per-



sons of this description that the taunt of ridicule is to be expected. And on this occasion, some of the newspapers amused the public with a number of singular anecdotes, ill adapted to promote his tranquility.

Except with one or two intimate friends, and that only at distant intervals, Mr. Hall was unable to bear any allusion to a subject which had occasioned him so much uneasiness, and involved him in such perplexity; and though a certain degree of self-estrangement is no unusual feature in men of extraordinary genius, yet the restlessness and mental absence which became so visible for some time afterwards, may very properly be regarded as the effect in great measure of this unfortunate attachment. His literary progression, though not wholly suspended, was frequently interrupted, and even his religious reputation was in some degree affected; for there are persons who inconsiderately believe that it is in the power of religion to subvert the order of nature, to eradicate its constituent principles, forgetting that its office is rather to restrain and purify the passions, and to yield support under the distress which their irregularity may have occasioned.

It unfortunately happened too, in the present instance, that, whether mistakenly or not, the aggrieved party entertained strong suspicions that the same agency which had been employed in effecting his removal from Bristol had likewise been exerted in endeavouring to alienate the object of



his affections, and had contributed in procuring to him the severest of all human disappointments. A combination of circumstances so painful and unexpected could not fail to produce, on a mind fraught with sentiments of honourable confidence, the most unhappy effects. A burst of indignation followed, which some may be disposed to blame, but at which none can be surprised. Arrangements were immediately made for retiring from a scene of so much vexation and calamity.

Before he had time to recover from his lacerations he had the misfortune to fall in company with one, who, unmindful of his situation and of the delicacies due to friendship, touched a chord that thrilled through every nerve, and in a moment threw him off his guard. Passing through Hertfordshire he called upon a lady of his acquaintance, who had the temerity to ignite his feelings by an allusion he was unable to bear, and which prompted a retort altogether at variance with his accustomed courtesy towards the other sex. During the interview he appeared so absent and involved in thought, that the lady, a sort of religious ultra, who “retained her vanity after she had lost her charms,” endeavoured in vain to command his attention, or engage him in any sort of conversation. At length, quite impatient with the reveries of her visitor, she ventured to display a little of her wit, by saying in a flippant tone, “I suppose sir, if I had been polished ‘Steel’ I might have expected some of your attention: but” . . . Madam,

replied the satirist, you may make yourself quite easy: if you are not polished Steel, you are polished Brass!

What his feelings were long afterwards, when reviewing from a distance the misfortunes which had attended him, may be seen in the letters he wrote to some of his confidential friends, of whose sympathy he was fully assured, and who knew well enough how to understand his touching allusions. To one in a state of affliction he plaintively remarks, This world is indeed a state of suffering, and it ought in some measure to reconcile us to our lot, that in feeling distress we strike chords in unison with the whole universe. Adversity is capricious in its times and seasons, but its visitations, sooner or later, never fail. "In some it overwhelms the first hopes of life, so that they no sooner begin to taste felicity in prospect, than they are crossed with hopeless disappointment." Others it permits to advance farther, waits till they spread the foundations of happiness deep and wide, that just when they have nearly finished the superstructure, it may overwhelm them with a more extensive desolation. Some are racked with pains and agonies of body, "others are a prey to disappointed passions and blasted hopes, wasted with devouring regrets, and sick at heart with melancholy retrospects, wishing in vain they could arrest the wings of time, and put back the current of life."

Recollecting also his recent separation from all his early associates, and finding himself the lonely

occupant of a solitary room in a distant part of the country, there immediately occurs a thrilling passage, whose direct allusion cannot be mistaken. Every individual, he says, thinks his own misfortunes the greatest. For the same reason we are never at a loss to hear our own voice, be it ever so slender; "the cry of a pierced heart sounds shrill in the solitary ear of the sufferer." Since we cannot essentially meliorate, let us endeavour to allay our anguish by moderating our expectations. All we can reasonably hope for on this side the grave is tranquility, not the insensibility of a statue, but the placidity of a well-informed mind, relying on the promises and the cheering prospects of immortality.

Pointed allusions to this painful circumstance may be found in his correspondence for upwards of twelve years afterwards, evincing the bitterness of his grief and chagrin, and the truth of the adage, 'Love may forgive all things but disappointment.' In one of his letters he says, Tranquility is not my lot. "The prey in early life of passion and calamity, I am now perfectly devoured with an impatience to redeem time, and to be of some lasting benefit to the church." A malignant writer in the *Quarterly Review*, totally unacquainted with Mr. Hall's history and character, and a stranger to all human sympathies, has quoted this passage to show that he was a man of great "turbulence," given to wrath and fury! The hypercritic must have known that he had perverted a term, to

convey the venom he was unable to suppress, and that he was writing a foul calumny on departed excellence.

The effects of the late unhappy altercation were not less severely felt by the opponent party, than by Mr. Hall himself. Dr. Evans did not long enjoy the undivided honours of the presidency. His constitution had been impaired by great exertions in the various duties of his office, and the grief which now afflicted him, soon sunk him to the grave. On the 9th of the following August he died, in the 54th year of his age, a loss to the christian world, by whom he was generally admired for learning and piety, for the courtesy of his manners, and the benevolence of his disposition. Mr. Hall viewed these events ever after with unfeigned sorrow and regret, and was often heard to say that Dr. Caleb Evans was one of the best of men, though unhappily misguided in the late transactions. After his decease he took pleasure in making honourable mention of his character, and hushed into silence the misunderstanding which had divided their friendship. The hand of providence was afterwards seen, though not immediately, in overruling all these painful circumstances for the furtherance of truth, and the reviving of a distant congregation which had long suffered from a sceptical ministry.



## SECTION V.

A. D. 1791, 1792.

MR. HALL commenced his stated labours at Cambridge in January 1791, and the transition was followed with the happiest effects, though it had been seriously deprecated by his venerable father and other intimate friends, as pregnant with danger to his personal piety and the steadfastness of his faith in Christ. It was soon found however, that the speculative opinions with which he was now coming into contact were of too cold a temperament to offer any attraction to his ardent mind; their chilling influence was felt only to be counteracted.

The situation had nevertheless its temptations and difficulties; and though it did not relax his religious principles, it brought him into closer union with speculative characters, and induced him to think more favourably of their exterior virtues than a due estimate of religious and moral worth would fully justify. In the former situation his creed was thought too lax, in the latter too rigid; but he was now placed where his faculties might expand to their full dimension, and where his argumentative appeals would not be heard in vain.



Under the neutralising effects of Mr. Robinson's ministry, many of the people had been brought to the very verge of Socinianism, and attached but little importance to sentiments of any kind; they hoped also to find in their new pastor a large if not an equal degree of undefined candour and liberality. Mr. Hall, who had recently felt the bitter effects of uncharitableness, now inclined to an opposite extreme, and was disposed to exercise almost unlimited forbearance and toleration. He invited to his pulpit the learned Dr. Abraham Rees, who was in the habit of visiting and occasionally preaching at Cambridge, and felt no scruple in paying the same compliment to other antitrinitarians who called to see him. This, though it had given much offence at Bristol, was highly agreeable to the people of Cambridge.

Mr. Hall was probably induced to think more favourably of some of the Arian and Socinian school, in consequence of the admissions of his highly esteemed friend, Mr. Toller of Kettering, who acknowledged he had read with much satisfaction several of Dr. Priestley's sermons on moral and relative duties, and who in the early part of his ministry discovered, as he afterwards lamented, too much generality and indecision on some points of vital importance. Yet with all Mr. Hall's admiration of piety and goodness under every form and aspect, and his readiness to concede their existence in connection with very inadequate and mistaken apprehensions of the truth, there was in

him no approximation to the socinian heresy, and no disposition to undervalue the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. He was overflowing with exuberant charity, but never sceptical or indifferent on points of religious belief.

The following passage, in a letter to a friend, sufficiently shows with what feelings he entered on his new situation, and how groundless were the objections of those who opposed his ministry at Bristol. Under date of Feb. 5th 1791, he says, "I am at present at Cambridge, in the element of peace at least, if not of happiness; and indeed, after the tumults of strife and din of parties, quiet itself seems happiness. The people are very harmonious, and much united to me. I could wish their sentiments were more orthodox, though the greater part of them are sufficiently so. They who are not, seem very ready to hear cool dispassionate reasoning on the other side of the question. I have tried their pulse several times since I have been here. On the first sabbath of my arrival, I preached in the morning on Heb. ix. 13, 14, an entirely controversial sermon in defence of the atonement. I had the satisfaction of finding few, very few who did not acknowledge the justness of my reflections, and that they who were not convinced were not displeased. I intend very soon to preach a sermon professedly on the Divinity of Christ. This and the atonement, I am more and more convinced, lie at the foundation of the true system of vital religion; nor will sinners

ever be converted to God by a ministry that excludes them."

It is said however, that after his first sermon at Cambridge on the doctrine of the atonement, one of his hearers followed him into the vestry, and remonstrated with him on the subject of his discourse, alleging that the sentiments advanced might serve to amuse old people on the brink of the grave, but they would not suit the people of Cambridge. Mr. Hall quickly replied, that whether the doctrine would "suit" or not, depended on its being *true*. If not true, it would suit nobody: but if true, it was equally suitable to persons of every age and under all circumstances. They might therefore expect the same doctrine to be frequently insisted on, if he continued his ministry among them. And at the end of six months, in the following July, he accepted the unanimous call of the church to the pastoral office.

Soon after the commencement of his labours here, an event transpired which made a deep and lasting impression on his mind, and tended not a little to quicken the fervour of his piety. His excellent father died, March 13th 1791. Dr. Ryland preached the funeral sermon at Arnsby, from John xix. 30, to a numerous and deeply affected audience. He wept nearly the whole of the time; but when at the close he made an allusion to the principal member of the family, the effect was overwhelming. "I am unable," said the affectionate

preacher, "to address myself to the relations of the deceased. I can only exhort you to join with me in prayer for them. Pray especially for that Son who gave himself up to this church, and was received into your communion while yet a child, and who by your advice and encouragement, gave himself up in very early youth to the work of the Lord." After this he added, with an emphasis peculiar to himself, "Pray that a double portion of the spirit which rested on his father may rest on HIM, and make him, according to our most sanguine hopes, and his father's unnumbered prayers, a blessing to the church of Christ for many years to come."

Mr. Hall was completely dissolved in tears at these fervent aspirations, and the testimony borne to the eminent piety of the deceased; and from that time especially, to the latest hour of life, he not only cherished an encreasing affection and esteem for his memory, but drank more deeply into the same religious spirit. He also manifested a peculiar regard for those who knew and loved his father, and delighted to dwell on every anecdote illustrative of his virtues and his piety. When speaking of his habitual devotion he observed to a friend, "there were but few minutes of the day, when free from other engagements, in which he did not offer up ejaculatory prayer;" adding, "I have never known any thing which so fully explains to my mind what it is to walk with God."

An interesting instance of his filial piety is men-



tioned in the funeral sermon by Dr. Cox, which occurred many years afterward. Going one day with a friend or two on a visit to Arnsby, "his mind was filled with recollections of his father, and the scene of his earliest days. No sooner did he enter the family dwellinghouse than he hastened to the parlour," a small room to which his father had been accustomed to retire for private devotion, "fell upon his knees, and poured forth the most fervent and humble supplications. Wishing not to interrupt these sacred moments, the two or three individuals who witnessed the intensity of his feeling, withdrew. Soon afterwards he went into the burial ground, and dropping on his knees at his father's grave, with his hands extended over the top of the monumental stone, and his eyes closed, but at intervals lifted up to heaven, he offered up a most remarkable prayer. He breathed forth an impassioned desire to join the blessed company above; entreated that he might be permitted to know his departed father, and that their united prayers on earth might then be turned into praise, while they beheld their Redeemer face to face together."

When a brief memoir was to be published, soon after his father's decease, he was requested to give a short sketch of his talents and character. In doing this he unconsciously portrayed the leading feature of his own future matured character, which combined the deepest humility with the loftiest intellect; and allowing for the immense difference



of literary advantages, there never were two minds more completely assimilated. In this brief and anonymous outline he remarked, that his father “appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them, for the natural element of his mind was greatness. At times he seemed to labour with conceptions too big for utterance; and if an obscurity ever pervaded his discourses it must be traced to this source, the disproportion of his language to the vastness of his conceptions. He had great force without ornament, and grandeur without correctness.”

The moral part of the portrait, in the following paragraph, will immediately be identified and transferred, as truly belonging to the writer himself. “Great abilities,” he observes, “are often allied to pride; but the character of the deceased [his honoured father] was an illustrious exception to this rule. His talents and virtues were in some measure concealed from the world, and almost entirely from himself, by a veil of the most unaffected modesty. He was never so happy as when permitted to sit in the shade, though the high opinion entertained of his abilities seldom allowed him that indulgence. It would be difficult to conceive a human mind more completely purged from the leaven of pride or of envy, than was that of our departed friend. In this particular his magnanimity was so great, that he seemed on all occasions desirous of sinking the recollection of himself

in the reputation and applause of his contemporaries. To cultivate the seeds of reflection and improvement in the minds of his inferiors, to behold the growing talents and virtues of his brethren, to draw merit from obscurity and give confidence to timid worth, formed some of the highest satisfactions of his life.”\*

Himself imbued with similar sentiments and feelings, near the commencement of his ministry at Cambridge, it may easily be conceived that his labours would have a corresponding effect, and be made to tell upon every species of scepticism and unbelief. His popularity, we are told, was at first but slow, “his style of preaching being of too high an order to be immediately acceptable to those who had never been accustomed to any thing similar to it. His own people however regarded him all along with warm admiration, and his continuance among them only encreased their attachment and veneration, until it was raised as high as human feeling could carry it.” The congregation gradually encreased, till in the course of a few years it was found necessary to enlarge the place of worship, which was soon full to overflowing, several of his hearers coming from a distance of sixteen miles. Members of the university also frequently attended Mr. Hall’s preaching; and as he delivered his greatest sermons in the afternoon,

\* The Complete Works, accompanied with a Memoir, of Mr. Hall of Arnsby, were collected and published in 1828, in one vol. 12mo. price 5s. Sold by Simpkin and Marshall.

and they attended the university church in the morning, it was not unusual to see fifty or more of them at the afternoon service, having shortened their dinners at the college-hall for the sake of enjoying a more intellectual and sacred repast. Several senators, as well as clergymen of the established church, received their first lessons in eloquence from his lips.\*

His religious attainments however, and ministerial usefulness, did not at any time abate the ardour of his patriotism, nor permit him to view with sanctimonious indifference the great political questions of the day. Cradled and nurtured as he had always been in the principles of civil and religious liberty, it was impossible for him to escape the influence of those stupendous events which marked the era of his public ministry. He also understood christianity too well, to view it as something apart from the general interests of mankind; he felt that it made him a citizen of the world, in whose welfare and happiness he had a deep concern, and that an enquiry into the more hidden causes of those great movements which influence, under God, the destiny of nations, was an exercise of the mental powers, not unworthy of those the most distinguished for piety and goodness.

The French revolution of 1789, though exhibiting in its progress so sanguinary a character as to excite general indignation and abhorrence, was

\* Mr. Newton Bosworth's Discourse on the decease of Mr. Hall.

nevertheless an affair of such magnitude and importance as deeply to engage the attention of all classes, and kindle up the feelings of different parties in the state. The eloquence of the senate was employed in denouncing, and also in defending the change which had taken place. The excesses committed in France, it was justly said, had their origin in a system of despotic government, which deformed and corrupted human nature ; a species of tyranny which trampled upon the property, the liberty, and the lives of its subjects ; that dealt in extortions, dungeons and torture ; and that prepared beforehand a day of sanguinary vengeance, when the irritated populace should possess themselves of power. The people, though unhappily misguided in particular instances, had done right in placing the supreme authority in the hands of those by whom it could justly be exercised, and had reduced their sovereign to the rank which properly belongs to kings,—that of administrator of the laws established by the free consent of the community.\*

Three or four months after the event had transpired, the celebrated Dr. Price eulogised the revolution, in a splendid sermon on the Love of our Country, in the course of which the patriot exclaimed, “ What an eventful period is this ! I am thankful that I have lived to see it. I also see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading, and a general amendment beginning in human affairs ;

\* Sheriden's Speech in Parliament, January 1790.



the dominion of kings exchanged for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience. Be encouraged, all ye friends of freedom, and writers in it's defence. The times are auspicious; your labours have not been in vain. Behold kingdoms, admonished by you, starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from their oppressors. Behold the light you have struck out, after setting America free, reflected to France, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates all Europe."

Dr. Priestley also, Sir James Mackintosh, and a number of other writers defended the same cause with great ability. Political societies were formed in various parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of effecting a parliamentary reform on the principles formerly advocated by Mr. Pitt, as the only means of saving the country from the convulsions of a revolution. The government however, under the direction of this political apostate, armed itself with vengeance against the friends of reform, and the adherents of the antimonarchical system; filled the country with spies and informers, abridged the liberty of the press, prosecuted several writers and publishers, banished some worthy men, and raised up a tory faction that spread terror and dismay throughout the land. On the 14th of July 1791, an infuriated church and king mob commenced an attack on the peaceable friends of reform at Birmingham, destroyed the dissenting chapels, set fire



to the dwellinghouse of Dr. Priestley, consumed his library, his valuable philosophical apparatus, manuscripts and papers, and for three ensuing days continued their depredations on the houses and effects of other dissenters in the neighbourhood.

It was impossible for Mr. Hall, or any other enlightened and benevolent person, to contemplate with indifference such a scene of outrage, whoever were the sufferers, or not to sympathise with the friends and martyrs of freedom; and if they were unfortunately adverse to those christian principles which commanded his highest regard, it would not exclude them from a share in his patriotic affections. The existence of such feelings and predilections would also lead him to seek, rather than to avoid, intercourse with persons of this description, especially as the greater portion of talent and intelligence was, and ever will be, spite of the egotism, in alliance with the cause of civil and religious liberty. At the same time the tendency and effects of such intercourse, necessarily accompanied with polite and reciprocal expressions of esteem, may easily be imagined. The obnoxious parts of a hostile system of religion would gradually disappear, or be merged in the admiration of those moral and social virtues which are often found in highly cultivated minds, independently of every article of christian belief. It is possible moreover, that the courtesy shown at this time to the anti-evangelical party was construed into a more favourable

opinion of their sentiments than was really entertained or intended, and that Mr. Hall's urbanity and politeness, and his great partiality for scientific and literary men, were all mistaken for christian sympathy and complacence.

It is quite certain that, as the baneful effects of latitudinarian principles began more fully to display themselves in the congregation, and to meet his eye in the domestic circle, he took the alarm, and felt more deeply the practical importance of evangelical truth. Subsequent afflictions and trials greatly strengthened and confirmed this conviction, gave to his religious sensibilities an additional tone of piety, and to his ministry new energies and loftier strains of eloquence. The congregation, recovered from its torpidity, began to feel the influence of the truth delivered; many who had hitherto considered religion to be little more than a code of morals, requiring a decent exterior, now discovered that the gospel consisted of doctrines to be believed, as well as precepts to be obeyed; that the atonement of Christ especially, is not an eastern allegory, but a vital principle, pervading and invigorating every part of the christian system. The essential articles of faith, limited in number, were freely stated and defended, their moral tendency demonstrated, and the consequent obligations explained and enforced with encreasing power and success.

But with all his zeal for the truth, and all his forbearance towards heretical offenders, he had

very little patience with the enemies and betrayers of civil and religious liberty, especially when they appeared among the ranks of dissenters, who owe their origin and existence to the prevalence of these principles, and are expected from their very profession to be the true conservators of our constitutional rights and privileges. The political convulsions on the continent, which had now assumed a most decided and formidable character, and laid prostrate the throne of the Bourbons, did not fail to awaken general expectations, unhappily not yet realised, that the progress of events would bring in its train the amelioration of the moral and political condition of Europe and the world, though little more resulted than the partial humiliation of the papal hierarchy. In these benevolent hopes and wishes Mr. Hall very ardently participated, while he deplored, with all the friends of humanity, the sanguinary effects produced by these revolutionary movements. When therefore he heard of one or two dissenting ministers of some distinction sounding an alarm, and deprecating all political discussion, in order to prevent the progress of opinion, he was unable to suppress his indignation.

The first of these gentlemen was the Rev. John Clayton, at that time minister at the Weigh House, who obtained a celebrity, which he has never forfeited by any concession, for his political sermon of July 1791, impeaching the loyalty of the dissenters, exhorting them to abstain from all political associations, denouncing them as disaffected to the

government, and insinuating that the outrage committed on Dr. Priestley and his friends was the re-action of those violent passions he had cherished, and that he and Dr. Price seemed to have been “born to vex the state.”

Conceiving that the advice thus obtruded on the public was favourable to servile principles, and that it tended to degrade the religious community to which he belonged, Mr. Hall entered his protest against the adoption of a rule at once repugnant to the fundamental rights of mankind, and unwarranted by the written code or example of the founders of our faith. Mr. Hall's Reply was published in September, about two months after the appearance of the ‘sermon,’ and comprised the following topics. ‘The duty of private christians in relation to civil polity—the duty of ministers in reference to the same—the pretences which Mr. Clayton advances for his doctrines—and reflections on the test act.’ This stinging pamphlet contains some of the severest strictures that were ever exhibited against any court sycophant or political traitor since the odious reign of the Stuarts, and satirises all classes of episcopal tories and apostate high-church dissenters, as alike obnoxious to genuine patriotism and the benevolent spirit of christianity.

Mr. Hall's eulogium on Dr. Priestley, in reply to the invectives of his opponent, to which he will be indebted for a political immortality, is too exquisite to be here omitted. “The religious tenets



of Dr. Priestley," says this incomparable writer, "appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favoured, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints and a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide."

Full forty years have now elapsed since this pamphlet was first printed, yet the concluding part of it, relating to the aspect of the times, may now be read with unabated interest; the great political convulsions of that period forming only the first scene of the drama which is still acting on the theatre of Europe, and with the prospect of a much happier result in reference to the interests of revealed religion. The writer's remarks afford a fine instance of the prophetic foresight of genius, of the value of sentiments deduced from principles and passing events, and of warnings grounded



on facts which display the character of human nature.

“Europe never presented such a spectacle before,” said Mr. Hall, “and it is worthy of being contemplated with the profoundest attention by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones; who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary. These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature, to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up, new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have long been held in veneration as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age has cemented and confirmed, which power has supported, which eloquence has conspired to embellish and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened can reach.”

After briefly noticing some of the beneficial effects which had resulted from the subversion of despotism, and its tendency to elevate the human character, the writer anticipates the future conse-

quences likely to be produced, and the sources of reflection it will furnish to the devout and contemplative part of the community.

“The events which have already taken place, and the further changes they forebode, will open to the contemplative of every character innumerable sources of reflection. To the philosopher they present many new and extraordinary facts, where his penetration will find ample scope in attempting to discover their cause, and to predict their effects. He will have an opportunity of viewing mankind in an interesting situation, and of tracing the progress of opinion through channels it has rarely flowed in before. The politician will feel his attention powerfully awakened, on seeing new maxims of policy introduced, new institutions established, and such a total alteration in the ideas of a great part of the world, as will oblige him to study the art of government afresh. The devout mind will behold in these momentous changes, the finger of God; and discerning in them the dawn of that glorious period in which wars will cease, and anti-christian tyranny will fall, will adore that unerring wisdom, whose secret operation never fails to conduct all human affairs to their proper issue, and impels the great actors on that troubled theatre to fulfil, when they least intend it, the counsels of heaven and the predictions of its prophets.”

During this unprecedented period of agitation, another dissenting divine placed himself on the

side of tory politics; but Mr. Hall condescended to make no other reply than by a casual notice. This was the Rev. John Martin, pastor of the baptist church in Grafton street, London, who delivered about the same time his famous sermon at Broad street, in which he also presumed to represent the general body of dissenters as disaffected to the state, merely because he had not sufficient capacity to perceive the consistency between a loyal attachment to the genuine principles of the british constitution, and a repugnance to that corrupt influence by which its energies were impaired, and to the measures of those by whom the government was administered. Of the minister of the day it was justly observed by earl Grey, then a commoner, that "his whole political life was one continued tissue of inconsistency, of assertion and retractation; that he never proposed a measure without intending to delude his hearers; that he promised every thing and performed nothing, and never kept his word with the public; that he studied all the parts of a captivating popularity without even intending to deserve it, and that from the first step of his political life he was a complete public apostate." No wonder therefore, if those who suffered themselves to be deluded by his specious pretensions, should have felt disposed to exclaim very bitterly against such as reserved their homage for the shrine of liberty. Mr. Martin however, for his censorship, incurred the indignant frowns of several of the leading members of his

own denomination, who viewed with extreme disgust the conduct of this ‘accuser of the brethren.’ But this instance of political subserviency was soon followed with marks of distinction from another quarter, not a little flattering to the vanity of the censor, while it tended only to encrease the suspicions of his friends. Mr. Martin was caressed by some of the church dignitaries, who condescended to visit him; he also had several interviews with the bishop of London, through whose influence he was appointed almoner of the *Regium Donum*,\* the distribution of which was reluctantly received by several of the poorer ministers, who considered it as the price paid for the impeachment of their loyalty.

Mr. Hall viewed these proceedings with much suspicion, especially the interviews at the episcopal palace, and sarcastically remarked in his pamphlet,

\* This Treasury grant originated in 1723, when it was offered by the minister of the crown, and accepted by a few of the principal dissenters, as some compensation for the disabilities arising out of the corporation and test acts; but as these statutes have since been repealed, this species of royal bounty should no longer be expected. The grant from the king’s privy purse consisted at first of £500 every half year, was afterwards encreased to £750, and paid into the hands of some dissenting minister appointed by the crown. This almoner divided the amount equally among the three denominations, and courteously allowed the distribution to be made by some of their principal ministers. On the death of Dr. Samuel Stennet in 1795, who had been the sub-almoner for the baptist denomination, Mr. John Martin aspired to the vacant office, and obtained the appointment in consequence of an application to the archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Pitt. The ministers of the two other denominations not relishing this appointment, nor the means by which it was obtained, left the king’s almoner with nearly the whole of the £1500 a year at his own disposal.



“that Judas had no acquaintance with the chief priests, till he went to transact business with them.” It so happened however, not long afterwards, that the satirist himself was introduced to the pious and amiable bishop of London, though on his part it was entirely unsought and unexpected. His lordship’s chaplain, the Rev. John Owen, late secretary to the Bible society, had made an acquaintance of Mr. Hall; and wishing to gratify his patron with the sight of so extraordinary a genius, he invited him to visit the gardens at Fulham. While they were walking together, and descanting on the shrubs and flowers, the bishop approached, entered into friendly conversation, and invited the redoubtable noncon into his mansion. On a subsequent day he accepted an invitation to dinner; and in consequence of the various misrepresentations which had gone abroad, his lordship made several enquiries about the actual state of the dissenting interest, of which he had previously obtained only some scanty information. The conversation relative to the encreasing number of dissenters, their talents and influence, ecclesiastical government and discipline, their religious and political opinions, seemed to surprise him; and when informed of their entire distinction as a body, from the small party of anti-trinitarians, who at that time affected to call themselves “the” dissenters, the “rational” dissenters, it afforded the pious prelate much satisfaction, while his candid and liberal observations were no less gratifying to his visitor. After the interview the bishop



expressed to his chaplain his great admiration of the splendid abilities of Mr. Hall, whose conversational powers had afforded him so rich a treat.

On a much later occasion, when referring to this interview, Mr. Hall lamented the dishonourable but evident subserviency of the hierarchy to the state, and feared that a truly pious bishop was a very rare phenomenon ; and that when such characters did appear, ‘few and far between,’ they either had no influence in the church, or were deterred from using it to any important purpose. Bishop Porteus, whose inclination to promote the interests of religion could not well be doubted, had so much of the fear of man about him, or was so careful to avoid giving offence, that he was not known directly to patronise more than one evangelical clergyman, and that only a little before his death. If after the lapse of so many years any considerable addition has been made to the number of decidedly pious prelates, it is not evinced by any amelioration in the state of the church, or by any liberal patronage and encouragement given to the orthodox clergy, though it is sufficiently obvious that the prosperity, and even the perpetuity of the establishment, chiefly depend on the adherence and devotedness of an enlightened and efficient ministry ; for in the hands of the common clergy, and their tithe exactions, it would soon be brought to desolation ; and the people, neglected and forgotten, would be driven to seek manna in the wilderness.

If encreasing numbers of pious ministers have of late years entered the church, they have generally done so without any countenance from the superior clergy, oftentimes, in despite of their influence, and are chiefly indebted to their own means, or the exertions of private individuals, supported by the suffrage and good wishes of the people, who are no longer satisfied with secular priests and worldly incumbents. It was indeed remarked by one of the prelates, at the annual meeting of the Church mission-society, not long since, that he had more hope of the stability of the national establishment, from its missionary labours in propagating the gospel, and its other religious and benevolent institutions, than from its alliance with the state.\* Since then another prelate has thought proper to warn the clergy of his diocese, of the necessity of more circumspection in their conduct and in the manner of performing their official duties, seeing it was highly probable that an effort would be made to divorce the church from the state, ('a consummation devoutly to be wished,') and in that case its stability, he observed, would depend more upon the character of the officiating clergy, than hitherto it had done.†

The distant and occasional intercourse of Mr. Hall with bishop Porteus and his chaplain, and other eminent individuals in the establishment, induced a persuasion that liberal offers had been

\* Bishop of Chester, 1828.

† Bishop of Lincoln's charge, 1830.

made, if he could consent to transfer his communion. This seems scarcely credible; for however desirable his alliance might be to men of power and distinction, his principles were too well understood to admit of such a proposition, in whatever terms conveyed, and it was equally well known that he had none that would coalesce, none that could at any time be compromised for the highest honour or emolument, either in church or state. Some minor biographies have asserted that he had an offer of church preferment from the late bishop of Durham. The truth however appears to have amounted to no more than this. Dr. Barrington, who read and admired his writings, was heard to say that Mr. Hall would be a great acquisition to the church, where his splendid abilities would meet with a more ample recompense than is generally found in the stipend of a dissenting minister. This remark was casually mentioned in conversation by a clerical friend, who joined in the regret that he was not a member of the episcopal community; neither the prelate nor his reporter, probably, understanding how little Mr. Hall valued such sort of immunities, nor how far he was removed, as a voluntary exile, from all the attractions of wealth and worldly ambition.

But his having been more than once to "the palace of the high priest," and his esteem for the pious bishop of London, prevented a repetition of the sarcasm on Mr. Martin; and not wishing to perpetuate any strong political feelings against

either of his dissenting brethren, beyond the immediate occasion of their excitement, Mr. Hall never suffered a second edition of his strictures on Mr. Clayton's sermon to be printed, and would take no money that might be offered for the copyright. Such however was the general eagerness to get a sight of this caustic pamphlet, that a guinea was offered for a single copy, though the original price was only eighteenpence. The public appetite must after all be gratified; a small edition was clandestinely printed some years afterward, and a few copies sold at a high price, under an appearance of being part of the first impression. The paper, ink, type and composition were carefully imitated; nothing led to a detection, but what has often proved fatal to imposture,—the water mark in the paper, which was found to be of a later date than the original edition. As soon as this was discovered, the remaining copies were suppressed.

This singular performance having long been a matter of curiosity and anxious enquiry, its re-appearance in the new edition of the author's works will be hailed with satisfaction, there being no sufficient reason for suppressing what at a former period, and under other circumstances, the author might wish from various motives to withhold. It will now be regarded as an interesting piece of literary history, and serve as a memorial of the writer's inviolable attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty, regardless of the individual or the party by which it may be opposed.



## SECTION VI.

A. D. 1793, 1794.

DISGUSTED and alarmed at the proceedings of the minister of the day, who, not content with fines and imprisonment on authors and publishers, meditated nothing short of the total suppression of all freedom of speech and writing, Mr. Hall published in 1793 his celebrated "Apology for the Freedom of the Press, and for general Liberty," a work imperiously demanded at that memorable crisis, and which is unquestionably one of the most powerful ever written on that or any other subject. The general consternation excited by its appearance is not easily described; several large editions found a rapid sale, the high-church party became indignant and inflamed, and some of the author's own friends were apprehensive for the consequences; but his character and his fame rendered him too formidable for attack. No one ventured to publish a reply, for the work was unanswerable. Some of the tory critics could not help admitting, that "if a book must be praised at all events for being well written, this ought to be praised."

The general sentiments of this performance are similar to those exhibited in the former pamphlet,



but more expanded, and confirmed by a train of eloquent and powerful reasoning. The topics which pass under review are, 1. The right of public discussion. 2. On political associations. 3. Reform of parliament. 4. Theories and rights of man. 5. State of the dissenters. 6. Causes of existing discontents.

The latter of these topics is discussed with peculiar energy, and the discontents of that period are stated to have arisen from the accumulation of debts and taxes, the encreasing patronage of the crown, the inclination of ministers to arbitrary power, the maintenance of a standing army to overawe the people, filling the country with spies and informers, exciting alarm at political associations and pretended insurrections, for the purpose of preventing free discussion and stifling the complaints of the people; who are here reminded that, though “a vindictive ministry may hang the terrors of criminal prosecution over the heads of a few with success, it would be at their peril to attempt to intimidate a nation.”

In the author’s apprehension, the state of public affairs was at that period the fullest of terror and of danger of any that had previously happened. “In the extension of excise laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined adherence to abuses, in the desertion of pretended patriots, the spread of arbitrary principles, and the tame subdued spirit of the nation, we behold the seeds of political ruin quickening into life. The little of public virtue

that still subsists, is no match for disciplined armies of corruption." He afterwards remarks, that "the evils of anarchy and of despotism are equally to be dreaded, and between these no middle path can be found but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either side, the streams of corruption must be drained off, the independence of parliament restored, the ambition of the aristocracy repressed, and the majesty of the people lift itself up."

About ten years before this time Mr. Pitt was the strenuous advocate of reform, on the principle laid down by the duke of Richmond, that of universal suffrage and annual parliaments, as the only remedy of existing evils; but after his elevation to power he resisted with the greatest pertinacity every attempt at reform, however limited or moderate, on the ground of its being unnecessary or unseasonable. "This pretence for delay," says Mr. Hall, "will appear the more extraordinary, in the british ministry, from a comparison of the exploits they have performed, with the task they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt, for cementing a system of corruption that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage, for carrying on havoc and destruction to the remotest extremities of the globe, for accumulating taxes which famish the peasant and reward the parasite, for banding the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public spirit; and for the completion of these achievements they

have suffered no opportunity to escape them. Elementary treatises on time mention various arrangements and divisions, but have never touched on the chronology of statesmen. These are a generation who measure time, not so much by the revolutions of the sun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two eras particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period when they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out; which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to the people, whose grievances they display in all the colours of variegated diction. But the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold everything in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradise, or mending the air of elysium.

Dr. Horsley, the fit successor of the Bonners and Lauds, in their slavish principles, having been rewarded with a bishopric for his successful opposition to the theological errors of Dr. Priestley, was now disposed to return the courtesy by denouncing the dissenters as disaffected to the state; and delivered, on the appropriate day of 'St. Charles's martyrdom,' a sermon, in which he endeavoured to revive the long-exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, and the divine right of kings. Against this haughty prelate Mr.

Hall directed the force of his reasoning and powers of sarcasm, but said, that to render him the justice he deserved, would require "all the fierceness of his own character."

In the preface to his Apology he remarks, "It is not a little extraordinary that this defender of tyranny, and patron of passive obedience, should affect to admire the british constitution, whose freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not say that the barons of Runnemedede acted on his maxims, in extorting the magna charta from king John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry iii. If he approve of their conduct he gives up his cause, and is compelled at least to confess the principles of passive obedience were not true at that time: if he disapprove of their conduct, he must, to be consistent, reprobate the restraints which it imposed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his lordship pretends to applaud, were effected by resistance; the freedom of the british constitution flowed from a departure from passive obedience, and was therefore stained with what he calls "high treason against the authority of God." To these conclusions he must inevitably come, unless he can point out something peculiar to the spot of Runnemedede, or to the reign of king John, which confines the exception to the general doctrine of submission, to that particular time and place.

"With whatever colours the advocates of passive



obedience may varnish their theories, they must of necessity be enemies to the british constitution. Its spirit they detest, its corruptions they cherish ; and if at present they affect a zeal for its preservation, it is only because they despair of any form of government ever being erected in its stead, which will give equal permanence to abuses. Afraid to destroy it at once, they take a malignant pleasure in seeing it waste by degrees, under the pressure of internal disease." The writer then turns from this disgusting picture of sanctimonious hypocrisy and priestly insolence, to address a warning voice to the nation that may "disturb its slumbers ; if it cannot heal its lethargy."

Of all the writers who have exposed the evils arising out of the alliance of church and state, no one has done it so effectually, and with such invincible arguments, as the author of this celebrated pamphlet. "The only pretense," he observes, "for uniting christianity with civil government, is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it has any power, operates on the consciences of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions ; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and



tumult of worldly policy. Human laws may debase christianity, but can never improve it; and being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force."

The writer proceeds to demonstrate, not only the absolute inutility of a national establishment, in reference to the interests of true religion, but its injurious effects upon those interests, by the price it pays for defending and perpetuating its corruptions, the negative it puts upon all improvement, the arrogance it claims to arraign those as enemies of the state who are not convinced of the divine right of episcopacy, its tendency to inflame the animosity of parties by the undue ascendancy of its own members, and its general hostility to the genuine spirit of christianity. "Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall see the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed. In England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter: and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer, that piety flourishes much more among dissenters, than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems wanting in any country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels but a splendid establish-

ment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate both in discipline and doctrine every error and abuse."

Its tendency to lower the christian ministry, by rendering it subservient to secular purposes is too evident to be denied. "Considering themselves as allies of the state, yet having no civil department, its ministers will be disposed on all occasions to strike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any just and reasonable bounds. They will insensibly become an army of spiritual Janizaries. Depending, as they everywhere must, upon the sovereign, his prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better instruments be contrived for the accomplishment of arbitrary designs. Their compact and united form, composing a chain of various links which hang suspended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying that impression which may soothe, inflame, or mislead the people.

"On abuses in the church, it is to little purpose to expatiate; they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unless it be a maxim, that honesty will endanger her existence, her creeds ought in all reason to correspond with the sentiments of her members. The world it is to be feared will be little edified by the example of a church, which in compelling its members to subscribe opinions that few of them believe, is a discipline of fraud. But no reform it seems must

take place in the church, any more than in the state, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progress of its ally. The act of toleration has indeed abated the violence of persecution, but so long as a church with chartered and exclusive rights is to be kept up, the source and spring of intolerance can never be exhausted; the stream from the infernal pit will issue through the crevices, until they are filled up with the ruins of all human establishments."

Many years elapsed before Mr. Hall permitted another edition of this work to be published, not that he at any time retracted his opinions on the main points in discussion, but because he did not wish to repeat some of the personal reflections, nor to perpetuate all the pointed expressions he had used on this occasion, many of which were elicited by the extraordinary state of the times. He felt that interests of high moment were at stake; and though he modestly regretted the use of strong language, no one ought to regret that he bent the whole energy of his mind to the subject, and defended the liberties of his country with fervour and vehemence. His conduct in this instance requires neither vindication nor apology; his high intellectual powers, his natural ardour and undaunted spirit, eminently fitted him for such an undertaking, and he needed no urging in the path his judgment compelled him to pursue. In a great crisis he was not likely to conceal his political

opinions, nor can they be hidden or explained away; they are emblazoned on nearly every page of his writings, and remained unaltered to the latest period of his life.

It is observed by an able writer, that there is constantly going on in the world a conflict between good and evil; persons are evermore to be found adverse to all improvement, and the cause of human nature is not to be sustained without a struggle. This is especially true of those great periods which have been distinguished by revolutions in the government of nations, when the movements of the human mind have been more energetic and more rapid, and when men gifted with great power of thought and loftiness of sentiment have been summoned to the conflict. Thus commissioned, and bringing with them a passionate devotion to truth and freedom, they must and will speak with an indignant energy, and ought not to be measured by the standard of ordinary men in ordinary times.\*

Though the author judged it expedient to retire from the scene of political contention, chiefly because it interfered too much with higher engagements, and brought him into contact with secular characters more than he wished; his *Apology for the Freedom of the press* will always be the admiration of those who desire to nourish in their breasts magnanimity of sentiment and an unquenchable love of liberty. Some of the clergy, and others

\* Dr. Channing's Character of Milton.



of the high-church party, took occasion from his self-imposed and long-continued silence to represent that he had relinquished his political principles. Others, willing to gratify the cravings of public appetite, published, as in the former instance, a piratical edition of the work, and kept up for some time a clandestine circulation. The author was compelled at length to send out an authentic reprint, with an advertisement stating, that no change whatever had taken place in his political sentiments; but that on the contrary, the effect of encreasing years had been to augment if possible his attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and to the cause of reform, as inseparably combined with their preservation; and that few things would have given him more uneasiness than to have it supposed he could ever become hostile or indifferent to these objects.

At the time Mr. Hall was preparing a new edition of his *Apology*, a member of the government, aware of the powerful effects likely to be produced by its reappearance, employed a highly-influential friend to write to him, to lower if possible some of his statements, or to withhold the reprint. This however he could not do; but he omitted in his preface a passage reflecting on the character of bishop Horsley, candidly acknowledging that it appeared to him “not quite consistent with the spirit of christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius.” But for the severity with which he had treated the political character of Mr. Pitt,

“he was not disposed to apologise ; he had the fullest conviction that the policy, foreign and domestic, of that celebrated statesman, had inflicted a more incurable wound on the constitution, and entailed more permanent and irreparable calamities on the nation, than that of any minister in the annals of british history.”

The republication of this formidable pamphlet, after a suspension of nearly thirty years, and in consequence of loud and repeated importunities that the author would rescue himself from the various misrepresentations which his protracted silence had occasioned, called forth a torrent of invective from a writer in the *Christian Guardian*, a high-church periodical, complaining that the publication had not been suppressed, which would no doubt have been highly agreeable to the abettors of toryism, and still more so if it could be entirely forgotten. Nothing was wanting to effect so desirable a purpose but another star chamber, and another Jeffries to punish for heresy and sedition.

Mr. Hall soon unmasked the hypocrisy of this writer, who pretended that ministers of religion had nothing to do with politics, while at the same time those of his own communion were well known to take a very active part at public elections, in which few dissenting ministers interfere, and had withal a bench of bishops to deliberate on all the measures brought before parliament ; and that in fact, the reviewer could have no objection to

Mr. Hall's meddling with politics, but that he had meddled on the wrong side ; and had the same talent been exerted in eulogising the measures of ministers, instead of arraigning them, his greetings would have been as loud as his invectives were bitter. To the charge of being a radical reformer, adverse to the constitutional form of government, of having censured Dr. Horsley and eulogised his socinian opponent, denounced the sinecure church without any scriptural authority, and exploded the convenient doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, together with a long etcetera of other political heresies,—the acute and sarcastic reply of Mr. Hall is highly satisfactory, and will be a fine treat to the impartial and intelligent reader, who will see with what ease he throws a tory reviewer on the horns of a dilemma, and tramples him in the dust. It is quite fortunate that some of these writers, very few indeed, had the temerity to attack him, or we should have lost some of the finest specimens of his wit and genius, and some of the noblest actions of his whole life.

## SECTION VII.

A. D. 1795.

SELDOM has a human mind been more completely purified from party and sectarian feelings than was Mr. Hall's; himself a dissenter and a baptist, he gave no undue preference to those of his own community. The great point of attraction for him was moral excellence; in this he not only merged all the minor differences among real christians, but the respect which would otherwise be due to learning and genius. Towards ministers in his own immediate vicinity he was particularly kind and courteous, maintaining a brotherly intercourse on terms of the most perfect equality; far from indulging any feelings of envy, he took the sincerest pleasure in their prosperity and success.

One of the earliest of his acquaintances, in his new situation, was the Rev. Habakkuk Crabb, who became pastor of the pedobaptist church at Royston about the time Mr. Hall settled at Cambridge. This amiable man met with a succession of heavy trials and disappointments, which awakened the sympathies of his friend, and gave him a large share in his fraternal regards. After labouring



about four years at Royston, Mr. Crabb died, in the forty-fifth year of his age ; and the testimony borne to his worth, in the eloquent Oration which Mr. Hall pronounced at his funeral, on new year's day of 1795, will be regarded as one of the happiest efforts of his pen.

The sources of consolation suggested to the friends of the deceased, are equally adapted to similar bereavements, of which numerous affecting instances have recently taken place, and to none more than to the decease of the lamented author himself, whose loss the whole christian world deplores. The words of the apostle, in 1 Thess. iv. 13—18, are adapted, he observes, “not only to support the mind of a christian in the view of his own dissolution, but to administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, ‘Jesus wept.’ But the sorrow which a christian feels in such a situation is mingled with hope. By the light of faith he traces his departed friends into an eternal world ; instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of providence. The period of their trial is closed ; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor

complete ; the pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head ; and when ‘ he who is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.’ The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form in all probability a principal part of the happiness of the blessed.”

Early in June he attended an association of ministers at Kettering, where he delivered a glowing discourse from 1 Pet. i. 8, on the ‘ joy unspeakable and full of glory,’ and was heard with unmingled satisfaction and delight. The christian’s joy, unlike the guilty pleasures of worldly men, will bear the strictest investigation of reason and conscience, is independent of every other joy, existing amidst the greatest temporal destitution, is triumphant over all the evils of the present life, and even death itself. In laying open its sources he found it all to centre in an unseen Saviour, in the peculiar prerogatives with which he is invested, in the special interest he has in the Father’s love, the tender relation he bears to those who believe in him, his ability and disposition to secure their happiness ; the friendship subsisting between them is an undying friendship, and eventually they shall be with him where he is, to behold his glory.—After preaching, his conversation was remarkably lively and interesting ; and being appealed to by several of the ministers present, who had been discussing an intricate point of ecclesiastical history, he approached

the subject with a degree of familiarity that created very general surprise.

Occupying a conspicuous situation in the immediate vicinage of a University, it could not be expected but that such a preacher as Mr. Hall would command very general attention, and that persons of the higher class, and of literary attainments, would be captivated with his eloquence. Many of the collegians, as has already been observed, frequented his ministry, and occasionally some of the principals of the university attended. It required no diviner or soothsayer to explain this phenomenon, nor any extraordinary penetration to account for such an unusual excitement. Mr. Hall's well-known magnanimity and disinterestedness were amply sufficient to have protected him not only from the charge of sinister motives and party feelings, but from every breath of suspicion that he wanted to draw away disciples after him; for no man would have rejoiced more in the success of the gospel than himself, whether in or out of the Establishment. Yet there were some who, either unable to appreciate his abilities, or to bear the splendour which eclipsed every surrounding object, had the presumption to insinuate, in no very equivocal terms, the moral danger of such a proselyting ministry. Had the insinuation proceeded from ignorance of the true nature and genius of christianity, it might have been entitled to some excuse; but coming as it did from an enlightened and

popular clergyman, in other respects highly estimable, it brought with it all the rancour of envy, and all the bigotry of a distorted intellect.

The true sequel to this species of opposition, in this and in some other instances, will be found in the incomparable and unanswerable *Apology for the Freedom of the press*, which had by this time been widely circulated, and had made a powerful impression on the public mind. The undaunted manner in which the writer maintained the principles of general liberty, and demonstrated, not only the inutility of a national establishment for religious purposes, but its utter incongruity with the spirit of christianity, was adapted no doubt to rouse the easy believers in the divine right of episcopacy, and perhaps to arm them with prejudices against an author they were unable to confute; but the attempt at traducing character by the imputation of unacknowledged principles, instead of fairly meeting the force of an argument, is a proceeding that could not escape the severest censure.

The evils of a national establishment are too apparent in the alienation it produces between the wise and good, in the tendency it has to cherish a feeling of vanity and conceit, to give a lordly air of superiority, and a claim to the right of precedence among christian brethren, where nothing is entitled to that claim but superiority of talents and of piety. It stands directly across the path, to intercept that kindly intercourse, and those tender charities, which would do honour to the christian



profession, and which all parties would be equally anxious to participate. Unsupported by public endowments and regal authority, episcopacy itself would be perfectly harmless, as it is in Holland and also in the American states; it is its secular alliance that has impregnated the mass of evil, armed it with hostility, and cut the christian world in twain. The pious clergyman, whose hauteur has given occasion to these remarks, had he been an episcopalian only, and not a member of a throne-begirt establishment, would gladly have hailed Mr. Hall as a christian brother, and have felt himself honoured by his friendship and support. There have indeed been some noble exceptions to this clerical conceit, fostered by an unmerited and artificial elevation, in men whose magnanimity has raised them above these pitiful distinctions, and placed them on the pinnacle of christian philanthropy, where they can see over churches and steeples with perfect ease; and no one will recollect the intimacy which at a subsequent period subsisted between Mr. Hall and the Vicar of St. Mary's at Leicester, without regretting that a feeling of hostility should have been cherished in presence of a University, many of whose distinguished members had paid their willing homage to one whose genius and moral worth had justly rendered him the object of their admiration.

Aware however of the blighting influence of calumny, as far as unsupported assertions could go, Mr. Hall felt himself called upon to clear his minis-

trations from unmerited reproach, by an indignant refutation, which first appeared in a Cambridge weekly paper, and afterwards passed through two editions in another form, but is now entirely out of print. And as the public cannot afford to part with any of his compositions, or suffer them to pass into oblivion, it is deemed proper to preserve this, as an additional memento of the author's shrewdness and fidelity.

#### LETTER TO A CAMBRIDGE CLERGYMAN.

*August, 1795.*

Rev. Sir,

Altercation is at all times unpleasant, especially when occasions of disagreement arise between ministers of the gospel of peace, who reside in the same place. On this account no motive less powerful than self-defence, and the desire of vindicating aspersed innocence, could compel me to address you in this public manner, on the very extraordinary sermon you delivered last Sunday afternoon at your parish church. Not having had the satisfaction of hearing you, I am obliged to depend for my information on report; and I hope, if I am so unfortunate as to mistake or misrepresent your sentiments, you will be so kind as to set me right.

Your text I understand was Matt. vii. 15—20. 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.'

Your sermon I find was directed to a display of the arts of religious seduction, with a view to prepare and fortify your hearers against the design of bad men, who under the cloak of religion might endeavour to corrupt their innocence, and pervert their simplicity. You levelled these precautions particularly against the DISSENTERS; you complained of the artful methods they took to draw men off from the church, and that the BAPTISTS in particular would never be satisfied till they got your people under the water. You read, you remember, the following extract from Matthew Henry's comment on the words of your text, as applicable to the false prophets you had in view, observing that it would have the greater weight with some, as coming from a Dissenter. "If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness and love, with other christian graces. But if on the contrary, the doctrine these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly and contentious; to make them loose and careless in their conversation, unjust or uncharitable, factious, or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal liberty, and take

people off from governing themselves and their families, by the strict rules of the narrow way ; we may conclude that this persuasion cometh not of him that calleth us."

I have a right, sir, to demand who these ministers are, whose preaching tend to make their hearers "proud and contentious, factious or disturbers of the public peace." You cannot mean to guard your parishioners against preachers at a distance : precaution is useless where there is no danger. You unquestionably had in view some minister or ministers upon the spot. Permit me to ask who they are, and upon what authority you presume to charge their doctrine with being inimical to piety, and subversive of order and good government. Have you ever yourself heard them utter any such doctrines ? Or if you collect your ideas from hearsay, on whose report do you rely ? You are unquestionably not so little instructed in the principles of morality, as to be ignorant that calumny is a vice ; and that under every character by which you can wish to be respected—as a minister, as a christian, and a man of honour—you are called upon either to establish the truth of your positions, or to confess their falsehood.

You have thought fit to caution your people against being seduced from their attachment to the Church, by the supposed insinuations and artifices of the Dissenters. What insinuations, and what artifices have we ever practised ? Our dissent from the established church is public, tolerated by



the laws, and its reasons are open to the discussions of the whole world. Name if you can a single instance in which the Dissenters at Cambridge have attempted to make proselytes by any private and clandestine methods, by any other means than the open avowal of their sentiments. I believe you will not be disposed to make the same demand on *your* part; or if you should, I am prepared to give you a fuller answer than you wish.

As you pass from a general attack upon dissenters, to specify the Baptists in particular, and to put your hearers upon their guard against their arts of proselytism; I call upon you in the character of a Baptist to explain your insinuations. Produce, if you would not stand convicted as a public calumniator, *one* specimen of that unfair and ungenerous method of making converts which you have attributed to us.

Our sentiments on the baptismal rite exempt us from any temptation to lay an undue stress upon it. We consider it merely as the symbol of a christian profession, while you profess to believe that it “regenerates” the partaker, and makes him “a child of God.” It would be cruel and inhuman in *you*, not to enforce with eagerness the observance of a rite, which can confer such exalted privileges at so cheap a rate. You ought to remember too, that *our* mode of baptism by immersion is conformable to the laws of your own church, which appoints the candidate to be “dipped,” except in cases of weakness and disease.

The prominent feature in the description of these false prophets, whom you have undertaken to expose, was, that they preached a doctrine which had a manifest tendency to make people "factious," or "disturbers of the public peace." Now if it should appear, that the dissenting ministers in this town do not touch upon politics in their religious services, in any shape, their doctrine cannot be "factious," or have any tendency to make men "disturbers of the public peace." For myself, all who have ever heard me are witnesses, that I never introduced a political topic into the pulpit on any occasion; nor have I any doubt but the other dissenting ministers in the town can make the same declaration with equal sincerity. But had our conduct been ever so remote from this moderation and reserve, modesty should unquestionably have restrained *you* from becoming our accuser; when it is well known you are the chief, perhaps the only political preacher in the place, and that you often entertain your hearers with more politics in one sermon, than most dissenting ministers have done during their whole lives.

The doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance, which in better times Sacheverel was disgraced for preaching, are familiar in your mouth. The transient successes of the war were, in my hearing, the subject of your triumphant boast; the exiled clergy of France you acknowledge to be your christian brethren; and to soften the

harsh features of popery, you compared the difference of sentiment between its adherents and yourself, to that which subsisted between the gentile and jewish churches at Jerusalem. On the same occasion you assured us with infinite exultation, and with a degree of foresight which shows, that if we are "false prophets," you are not a true one, for you anticipated the speedy return of the emigrant clergy. In admirable consistency with your character as a Protestant minister, you dwelt with rapture on the prospect of seeing the walls of mystic Babylon rebuilt, and the ancient apostolic church of Rome restored with fresh splendour.

It is not *politics* then, it is evident, to which you entertain an aversion. Pardon me, sir, if when I hear of your ascetic pretensions to political indifference, I suspect a little disingenuity at the bottom. While you reprobate political discussions, you embrace every opportunity of inflaming political passions ; and that you may more securely guide the opinions of your admirers, you are anxious to keep them in the dark.

The fervour of religious zeal and ministerial attachment, with you, go hand in hand ; and any marked dislike to the measures of government is considered as a proof of religious decline, if not of total reprobation. Did you not lately industriously circulate an inflammatory prayer, for success in the present war ? Tell me, how you could take a more active part in politics, even if you were a hired tool of the ministry ?

Since then, instead of being a calm and indifferent spectator, you are thus decided in your own political views and conduct; why have not the Dissenters an equal right to form an opinion? May not their attachment to peace and reform, be as innocent as yours to war and corruption? How long is it since the support of the most profligate administration that ever plagued any country,\* an administration which has filled England with discord and Europe with blood; and which in addition to its other delinquencies, is filling up the measure of its iniquities by nearly reducing us to famine, has become the distinguishing criterion of true piety!

Permit me, before I close this address, to admonish you to be upon your guard against a persecuting spirit. While you explain the general truths of christianity, and inculcate its general duties, you will ensure the esteem of good men of all denominations, and find ample scope for the exertion of your ministerial talents. In addition to this, you have a right unquestionably to defend the doctrine and discipline of your particular church against the objections of dissenters, providing you do it by entering into the true merits of the question, without insinuations calculated to blemish the character of your opponents. Your ignorance of the controversy betwixt the Establishment and Dissenters must be extreme, if you suppose general

\* The Ministry of Mr. Pitt.



invectives against the disloyalty or irreligion of the dissenters, can have any tendency to bring it to an issue. Whether we have lost the purity of our religion or not, can be known only to that Being who searches the heart ; but your violation of the evangelical precepts of charity and candour, makes it evident that you have not found it.

You will probably be ready to enquire, why I have not addressed you in private on this subject, rather than through this public vehicle ; especially since I had yesterday so fair an opportunity, by being accidentally thrown into your company. My reasons for preferring this mode relate partly to you, and partly to myself. On the one hand, the impression made to the disadvantage of any body of men by a public accusation, can only be effaced by a public reply ; on the contrary, if I have misrepresented your meaning, you have a fair opportunity of publicly clearing yourself from the suspicion of calumny.

I have only to add, if the serious perusal of this letter tend in any degree to correct the virulence of your temper, or restrain the excesses of party zeal, your character will rise in the esteem of an enlightened public, and you will have abundant cause to rejoice, though fewer bigots should applaud, and fewer fools admire.

R. H.

## SECTION VIII.

A. D. 1800, 1801.

MR. HALL'S partiality for the tranquil pleasures of retirement, and his devotion to the great objects of the christian ministry, which he now prosecuted with encreasing energy and success, rendered him extremely averse from all controversy; and after publishing his famous pamphlet in defence of general liberty, he did not suffer himself to be called into the field for several years, till his services were demanded in another direction, to accomplish if possible a still more important purpose.

The corrupt forms of christianity in the Gallican church had engendered a stagnant mass of superstition and impiety, which issued in atheism and infidelity; and the revolution of 1789, opened the floodgates for its being let loose upon the world. "In that memorable tragedy of blood," says an elegant writer, "the military actors were but the puppets which the infidel philosophers had set in motion. They only rode the storm which mightier spirits had raised. They only cut the channels, and in some degree directed the course of that political lava, which the giant of tortured intellect,

struggling beneath the weight of an overwhelming and enthralling superstition, had poured forth over the face of the population." Not only were the principal agents of this great political change, men of sceptical principles, but unfortunately some of its leading advocates in this country were of the same description, a disgrace to the cause to which they were attached, and which soon expired in their embraces.

Christianity was caricatured and burlesqued by some popular writers who had a considerable hold on the public feeling, while by others its foundations were attempted to be sapped by a specious appearance of philosophical reasoning; and scepticism began to be the order of the day. Its pernicious tenets were formerly immured in the cloisters of the learned, or exclusively addressed to the polished classes of the community; now they pervaded most books of science and amusement, and he who sat down to the perusal of a treatise upon botany or geology was in danger of rising up a sceptic or an infidel. The baneful effects upon society soon became visible; many were ensnared by the insidiousness of men who had written with ability in defence of general liberty, and not a few of a more serious description abandoned the profession of christianity.

Grieved and alarmed at such a state of things, Mr. Hall attempted to trace the evil to its source; and the result of his investigation appeared in his celebrated Sermon on "Modern Infidelity, con-

sidered with respect to its influence on Society," which was printed in 1800, and procured for him the esteem of many illustrious characters in church and state. The object of this discourse is stated in the following manner by the author—

“Animated by numbers, and emboldened by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculations. By uniting more closely to each other, by giving a sprinkling of irreligion to all their literary productions, they aim to engross the formation of the public mind; and amidst the warmest professions of attachment to virtue, to effect an entire disruption of morality from religion. Pretending to be teachers of virtue and the guides of life, they propose to revolutionise the morals of mankind, to regenerate the world by a process entirely new, and to rear the temple of virtue, not merely without the aid of religion, but on the renunciation of its principles, and the derision of its sanctions. Their party has derived a great accession of numbers and strength, from events the most momentous and astonishing in the political world, which have divided the sentiments of Europe betwixt hope and terror; and however they may issue, have for the present swelled the ranks of infidelity. So rapidly has it advanced since this crisis, that a great majority on the continent, and a considerable proportion in England, of those who pursue literature as a profession, may



justly be considered as the open or disguised abettors of atheism."

In this profound discourse the metaphysical sophistry of the new school of scepticism, which founded all virtue in private interest or convenience, is exposed in all its native deformity, together with its total inefficiency to the production of any moral good, either to society or to individuals. Its tendency to atheism is reprehended with just severity, in one of the sublimest apostrophes that was ever penned by any writer. Many of these modern liberators had dissolved man's connection with the deity, and declared there was no God in whom to trust, in the great struggle for liberty. Human immortality, that truth which is the seed of all greatness, they derided. According to their philosophy man was a creature of chance, a compound of matter, an ephemeron, who was soon to rot and perish for ever. Who then could expect that such men were to work out the emancipation of their race, or that in such hands the hopes and dearest rights of humanity were secure.

"Their infatuated eagerness," says Mr. Hall, "their paricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler, unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent? What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers,

require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not pierce? Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance, in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!"

A performance like this, which has been considered as one of the noblest efforts of his genius, could not fail to irritate the whole tribe of unbelievers, whose hideous system it exposes to the detestation of every well-regulated mind. Nothing can be more fearfully sublime, than the picture given of the dreadful state to which atheism would reduce the world; or more beautiful and triumphant than his vindication of the social affections. Something therefore must be said against it, to show at least, that though the impious theory was shattered to pieces, its abettors had some quiverings of life still remaining. Accordingly, there appeared some animadversions from the pen of Mr. Anthony Robinson, who having laid aside his ministerial character along with his religion, seemed to think he could not give a stronger proof of his sincerity, than by acting as far as possible the part of a persecutor. Another of the new fraternity, but of a higher class, the author of an "Inquiry concerning Political justice," who had also been a dissenting minister, contented himself with glancing at what he called "the much vaunt-

ed sermon of Mr. Hall of Cambridge, in which every notion of toleration or decorum was treated with infuriated contempt !”

In stigmatising the author of the sermon as an enemy to toleration, the advocate of what was called ‘political perfectability’ gave an apt exemplification of his doctrine, and showed that those who make universal philanthropy a substitute for religion, are either ignorant of their own scheme of morality, or they know not how to put it into practice. In the insult offered to truth and justice however, in the present instance, there was nothing but what very well became the character of an infidel philosopher, who had previously the audacity to impeach christianity itself, and even its divine Founder, as intolerant and persecuting, demanding a belief in unexplained dogmas on pain of endless perdition. The manner in which Mr. Hall held up to public abhorrence the malevolence of this apostate, and other scorners, was such as the interests of society demanded ; and for this unanswerable and splendid performance he received the plaudits of the whole christian world.

In the present instance the author confined himself to one specific view of the subject—the total incompatibility of sceptical principles with the existence of society ; but proposed at some future period to enter into a more particular examination of the infidel philosophy, both with respect to its speculative principles and practical effects. This of all others would have furnished

the best antidote, and would at once have carried the war into the enemies' quarters; but unfortunately, this purpose, like many others, was never accomplished. It is true, other writers were called into the field of argument, by the lofty pretensions of these modern philanthropists; and among the rest, his intimate friend Mr. Fuller, who successfully exposed "the immorality and absurdity of deism," in his able work entitled the "Gospel its own Witness." And though it was not written precisely on the plan contemplated by Mr. Hall, it met his cordial approbation, and was generally admired for its sound and conclusive reasoning. "I have read Mr. Fuller's book with great pleasure," said he in a letter to a friend: "it displays an extraordinary force of understanding, and I hope it will be extensively useful. The two chapters on the Atonement are alone sufficient to make the writer immortal. Our friend however has higher views, and aims at a very different immortality from that which the breath of a worm can confer. He appears to me rather more at home in establishing the doctrines of christianity, than in detecting the absurdities of deism, though a considerable acumen is everywhere manifest." Dr. Hamilton, bishop of Kilkenny, himself the author of some valuable publications, strongly recommended this work to the attention of his clergy, as one of the ablest he had ever met with on the subject; and the excellent Mr. Wilberforce was of opinion that it was the acutest of all the author's performances.



There was one point however on which Mr. Fuller differed from the author of the sermon on Modern Infidelity. In charging the sceptics with subverting the law of nature, making virtue to consist in a passionate attachment to the general good, while they were labouring to eradicate the private affections, Mr. Hall expressed his persuasion that some able theological writers had undesignedly given them some advantage, in making virtue to consist in the love of being in general; contending that the order of things is evermore from particulars to generals, and that disinterested universal benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections, and not the root that bears them. His reasoning is, that we cannot *comprehend* the whole system of intelligent existence, nor the degrees of affection due to their infinitely various orders, and therefore the exercise of virtue would on this hypothesis be impracticable.

Mr. Fuller immediately perceived wherein this statement failed, and the bearing it had upon his own system; he therefore remarked, it was not necessary that we should be able to "comprehend" either one or the other; all that the argument required was, that the principle itself should be of an expansive *tendency*, ready to embrace the good of the intelligent universe as far as knowledge might extend. That what in this case is termed "the order of nature," is rather the order of *time* than of nature, as all knowledge is progressive, and what is unknown cannot be the specific object

of attachment. Mr. Hall did not appear at the time to relish this critique, but there is reason to believe that his sentiments were afterwards more coincident; at least it is quite certain, that he placed all religious and virtuous affection in the disinterested love of moral excellence.

It is generally known that Mr. Fuller had a great aversion to instrumental music in public worship; in some instances he refused to preach where it was in use, and in others he prohibited it during his occasional ministrations. A friendly discussion upon the subject having been entered into between himself and a neighbouring minister, the papers were afterwards shown to Mr. Hall, who in a letter of April 2nd 1800, gave his opinion upon the question in the following manner—

“I have now returned the manuscript, and think you have a manifest advantage over Mr. Fuller in this dispute. In my apprehension there is not room for a moment’s hesitation, on the lawfulness of instrumental music in christian worship, whatever may be thought of its expedience, a point on which no general determination can be passed, but must entirely be left to circumstances. Viewing the subject merely in the light of reason, the propriety of both kinds of music results from the fitness of certain sounds to excite and express devout emotion. This property they both have in a great if not an equal degree, and therefore to each attaches a natural suitability.

Considering them in the light of ordinances, the introduction of musical instruments in jewish worship by divine authority, will surely not prove that it is in itself wrong. Practices which have an inherent propriety are not rendered sinful, by their having been matter of positive institution, even when that appointment ceases; unless it be imagined that God exercises his sovereignty, by always selecting as the object of positive institutes, things in themselves ineligible, which seems to me a very harsh doctrine.—It is better in such points to avoid all eager altercation, and to practise the most perfect toleration. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that useth an instrument, to the Lord he useth it, and giveth God thanks: he that useth not an instrument, to the Lord he useth it not, and giveth God thanks.”

Mr. Hall however did not practically encourage the use of instrumental music in public worship; he preferred congregational singing, and the plain old tunes in which all could unite. He has been heard to express his delight when the whole congregation join in this noble exercise, and that the harmony of so many voices was to him quite inspiring. Sometimes indeed he expressed his admiration of cathedral chanting, or responsive singing, and wished that something approaching to it could be introduced into dissenting worship, to enliven and give expression to the feelings of devotion. He also approved the recitative style of the Scotch precentor, in giving out the psalms in the key

note; and whenever he himself read the hymns in public worship he chanted them out in a similar manner. Referring to this subject in one of his familiar conversations, he said, "I once heard a blundering roaring preacher at Margate, who had all the roughness of the wind without any of its power; and after being tortured for a whole hour, I was fully compensated by the delight I enjoyed at the close of the sermon. An old man, whose grey locks were hanging profusely on his shoulders, and whose countenance expressed much simplicity and piety, gave out with great feeling, in the recitative style,

Let the old heathen tune their song,  
Of great Diana and of Jove;  
But the sweet theme that moves my tongue,  
Is my Redeemer and his love.

This so charmed me that I could at any time endure to hear such a preacher, if I were sure it would be followed with such a delightful after-piece."

Mr. Fuller, though no advocate for chanting, wished to see introduced into public worship a different mode of singing, from that which has so long prevailed, and a selection of divine songs taking place of all human compositions. He conceived it practicable to reduce various scripture passages to prosaic numbers, without any regard to rhyme, and to have them set to plain solemn music, which would render an acquaintance with the sacred scriptures more familiar, and give a



higher degree of spirituality to christian worship. He alluded to several passages in Lowth's Isaiah as well adapted to the purpose, and expressed his belief that in a more advanced state of the church such a practice would prevail.

Independently of the objections to some points of the Calvinistic system, which Mr. Hall for some time cherished, he entertained considerable dislike to the generality of American divines, the professed followers of President Edwards, but more recently of Bellamy and Hopkins, who he thought had impaired the simplicity of the gospel by their affected refinements, and attempting to reduce every thing to metaphysical accuracy. The following circumstance gave occasion for the free expression of his sentiments on this subject, though it is not believed he would have formed exactly the same opinion at a later period of life.

Aware of his prejudices against the transatlantic theology, his correspondent lent him a very able work written by Dr. Spring, hoping to conciliate him in favour of so good a writer. Mr. Hall however lost the book after he had read it; and in the letter last quoted, he adds the following apology and remarks. "When I looked for the book, behold it was gone; but I will make another search, and return it if possible. If you had the same opinion of Spring with myself, you would bear his loss with great patience, for to me he is a most uninteresting writer. There is a great

paucity of ideas, and a certain appearance of subtilty, without any real depth. In short the American divines of the Hopkinsian stamp appear to me to be mere logomachists and logicians, formed for dispute, but as far as possible from original thinkers, President Edwards always excepted."

Mr. Fuller having published several able pamphlets on the nature and obligations of true believing, and successfully defended the principles of genuine Calvinism against the exceptions of various opponents, was frequently brought into friendly contact with Mr. Hall, who though he did not fully disavow those principles, yet was not disposed to attach to them an equal degree of importance, and took pleasure in promoting a little free discussion, and "setting brother Fuller's troops in motion;" but one day the contest was unusually severe. A common friend proposed a subject in conversation, on which he knew there existed some difference of opinion, and Mr. Fuller was reluctantly forced into the debate, which commenced with some calm and powerful reasoning. Mr. Fuller undertook to establish the doctrine of universal and total depravity, by a close and convincing appeal to scripture testimony, such as he had been accustomed to examine with great care, and to state with equal force and precision. Mr. Hall, doubting rather than disbelieving the statement, was in the humour for trying the strength of the argument

consequentially; and by an electric train of deductions greatly perplexed and nonplused his friendly antagonist, who in his unwieldy course round the point of an argument, required more time than his volatile friend was willing to allow, though as he afterwards admitted on another occasion, when he had turned the corner he came with the force of an elephant. The debate at length became very warm. Mr. Hall used some strong language, and sarcastically remarked that the doctrine he opposed was a libel on human nature. The friends who were present advised the exercise of mutual forbearance, and an amicable termination of the dispute.

The writer of these pages led Mr. Fuller out of the arena sorely chagrined and discomfited, complaining, as he had reason, of being reluctantly brought into competition with one whom he so much admired, but who instantly anticipated all he had to say, eat up all his words, and gave no quarter, but cleared the field of every argument, and slew indiscriminately all the host, by logic, by sophistry, or by sarcasm. He thought however, that in a written controversy, which admits of calm deliberation, and compels to greater decorum, he should be well able to sustain the argument, though in a verbal dispute no one could successfully encounter such an adversary, whose acute and powerful intellect pounces upon a statement with the quickness of lightning, and shatters it at once into a thousand pieces.

The animated discussion, though it ruffled the feelings for a time, did not interrupt their future friendship. It subsided into a calm and tranquil respect for each other's abilities, without wishing for such another occasion to call them into exercise. There was little congeniality of mind or feeling between these two great men, beyond what was inspired by their common faith; but Mr. Hall greatly respected his friend for his public virtues, for his zeal and ability in the cause of truth, and his having been the personal friend of his revered father. On Mr. Fuller's decease, many years afterward, he was deeply affected; and at the time of the interment he lingered behind, was the last to leave the grave, and while looking into it the tears rolled down his manly face upon the coffin.

'The tender tear which nature sheds  
O'er those we love, we drop it in their graves.'



## SECTION IX.

A. D. 1802, 1803.

TOWARDS the close of the preseding year Mr. Hall began to suffer from a peculiar species of hypochondriasis, which encreased in the following spring, and seems to have been the precursor of a disease which afterwards developed itself in a more serious form. There was a successive interchange of light and shade, accompanied with an encreasing tendency to gloom and sadness. His morbid peculiarities neither prevented the discharge of his official duties, nor the full exercise of his mental faculties, but left to him their entire command in reference to every subject save one; they cast a sombre hue on every object around him, filled him with uneasiness and restlessness, and an insuperable disgust of his situation. He could not endure the locality, nor the monotony of its scenery, and was anxious to make his escape from it; this feeling soon became deeply rooted and irremediable.

The disclosure of this state of mind was accidental, and was at this early period probably unknown to many of his friends; but in the beginning

of 1802 the author of these memoirs had it in contemplation to publish an elegant octavo edition of Saurin's Dissertations, as an accompaniment to his much admired sermons, and for this purpose was anxious to engage Mr. Hall in a new translation. The correspondence unexpectedly elicited some of the diagnostics of an approaching attack on the branular system, attended with occasional revivals, and numerous efforts to prevent or retard the progress of disease. The principal means of relief which he contemplated was that of a change of situation and employment; he even thought of declining the public ministry, from the exertion it required and the great demand it made upon his faculties, and of devoting himself to retirement and writing for the press, notwithstanding his general aversion to such engagements.

His correspondent entreated him not to think of resigning his ministerial office, but to try the effects of country air, by removing out of the town, to one of the neighbouring villages, as his predecessor had done before him, and there to amuse himself with the projected translation. By his answer, here subjoined, it will be seen that a dislike of Cambridge had taken full possession of his mind, though it had been to him a scene of so much honour and usefulness. Not long afterwards he took a journey on horseback, visited his friend in Bedfordshire, and wandered from place to place, hoping to find some relief from a country excursion.

*Cambridge, March 28th 1802.*

My dear Friend,

I am obliged to you for the kind interest you take in my situation, and it gives me real satisfaction to find that I have a share in your esteem. I have weighed the contents of your letter, but it has not led to the issue you wish. My intention of leaving Cambridge is not founded on light considerations, but on mature deliberation, and as much thought as I am able to employ. I feel the impossibility, humanly speaking, of being happy in this part of the country; nor would your scheme of retiring into the vicinity of Cambridge afford me relief, since it is the impression which the face of the country makes upon my spirits that forms the principal objection; not to say that after repeated enquiries, I find no situation in the neighbourhood of Cambridge is to be procured.

My design of retiring to the vicinity of Exeter is only for a time, by way of recruiting my health and spirits, unless some opening should occur for the useful exercise of my ministry; a circumstance, from all I can learn, not improbable. At all events I am persuaded, a change of situation is desirable; the rest I leave in the hands of providence. There is little room to doubt that my people here will be able to procure a successor every way as equal to the situation as myself.

As I propose to leave soon, I am desirous that the affair pending betwixt us should be brought to a definitive close. If your mind is not made up

upon the subject, I would be far from using any persuasion, as you are the best judge of the probable success of the undertaking. I hope however to have your final determination speedily, as I design, on leaving Cambridge, to form some other literary engagement, if you think proper to decline the business in hand.

I am, dear sir, yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

Recovering a little from this mental depression, Mr. Hall continued his labours at Cambridge without much interruption, though with no great comfort to himself. A transient peace with France having been effected by the treaty of Amiens, the nation in general hailed the event with great joy, and the court appointed the first of June 1802 as a day of public thanksgiving. Mr. Hall roused all his energies on the occasion, and poured forth his usual strains of eloquence from the pulpit and the press, in a Sermon entitled "Reflections on War," in which the author's modesty seemed to triumph over the general applause which his last publication had excited. The style is more chastened, the figures are less splendid, but the glow of patriotism is unabated. The evils of war are exhibited in their effects upon the natural and moral condition of mankind. The suddenness and the commonness of death which it occasions, the miseries attending its surviving instruments, and those immediately exposed to its ravages, besides the great



number who suffer from its remoter consequences ; the injuries which give rise to war, and those which it produces, in the suspension of all moral obligation, especially in the seat of war,—are all delineated with the hand of a master. These topics are improved to promote gratitude for the restoration of peace, and are enforced by a retrospect of the fatal extent, and the spirit of animosity, which characterised the late conflict.

The reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace, are introduced by the preacher with the following pathetic address. “ Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace may return. How can we better imitate our heavenly Father, than when he is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence. Let us hope, more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other’s views and sentiments will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. The speculations which gave occasion to them have been yielded to the arbitration of the sword ; and neither the fortune of war, nor the present condition of Europe is such as affords to any party room for high exultation. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion therefore all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions

which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessing we celebrate, and keep pace as far as possible with the movements of divine beneficence."

Notwithstanding the efforts made to recover his mental vigour, Mr. Hall still laboured under great bodily pain and depression of spirits, during the autumn of 1802; and while visiting his friends in Leicestershire he appeared unwilling to return to Cambridge, but yielded at length to their entreaties. About this time Mr. Fuller was laboriously occupied in the concluding part of the Socinian controversy, and publishing his confutation of the doctrine of Universal Salvation; and being aware of Mr. Hall's critical acumen, he was anxious to engage him as his coadjutor, in order to expose the literary incompetence and inordinate pretensions of its leading advocate. Mr. Hall's state of health and general feeling did not permit his accepting the invitation; and in a letter of October 6th he remarked, "If I were well, highly as I esteem Mr. Fuller's services in this cause, I should very reluctantly take any part in it, from my extreme aversion to the thorny paths of religious controversy." In default of this literary aid, the Rev. Charles Jerram, then curate of Long Sutton in Lincolnshire, having strictly watched the progress of the debate, and felt disgusted at the arrogant assumptions of the socinian writer, published a critical Review of the controversy on

the doctrine of the final salvation of all lapsed intelligences, under the signature of Scrutator; and when put into the hands of Mr. Hall, he remarked, "I have read the Review with attention. It appears to be a very shrewd and able pamphlet, and is an ample confutation of Mr. Vidler's miserable attempts at criticism; his affectation of learning fully justified a pointed rebuke, but the sarcastic strain is too long continued."

Still labouring under great indisposition, and unable to bear much confinement, Mr. Hall declined the proposed translation; but in the following spring the idea is revived, and the subjoined letter will show the disturbed and uncomfortable state of his mind up to that period.

*Feb. 2nd 1803.*

"Upon a reconsideration of the proposal you made me respecting the translation of Saurin, I feel myself inclined to embrace it. I think it may furnish me an agreeable occupation, and that a few hours every day regularly devoted to it may carry me through, without interfering with other engagements. I should be glad however of a few weeks notice, to rub up my French before I begin, and then you may depend upon my making the translation, I will not say elegant, for that is not the character of Saurin's style, but certainly as correct as I possibly can.

I have often wondered that a translation has never been made of the best Sermons of Massillon,

who is the greatest master of pulpit eloquence. I am of opinion that a good translation of that celebrated preacher would have an extensive sale. My admiration of Massillon would enable me, if I am not mistaken, to do more justice to him than to almost any other writer.\*

With respect to Saurin, if you have not engaged a translator, I should be glad to be informed more particularly as to the time of publication, and how long it will be in coming out. You will be ready to accuse me of great fickleness, in so soon changing my mind upon the subject of your proposal; but I have my reasons, such as appear to me solid, and such as a short time will probably explain."

R. H.

Amidst these affecting intimations there were frequent appearances of great serenity, and at all times of deep devotional feeling, which encouraged the hope that he might be spared from any painful visitation, though there were seasons of despondency which awakened the apprehensions of his friends. On the sixth of this month a passage occurred in one of his public prayers at Cambridge, which was remarked for its happy union of piety and elegance, while it expressed some foreboding of mental affliction and adversity. "If

\* In a blank leaf of Bossuet's Funeral Orations, which Mr. Hall had read, he made the following entry in his own handwriting. "The finest of mortal compositions, inferior only to the strains unutterable, of seraphs before the throne."



thou smilest upon us," said the humble suppliant, "let us have grace to acknowledge with gratitude and obedience the Author of every illumination. And if thou drawest a cloud over our path, let us retire behind it to converse with God."

It will scarcely be believed that this elegant writer, not only while labouring under depression, but in the best state of health, seemed never aware of the extent of his mental resources. When a second edition of his sermon on Modern Infidelity was called for, he "could not account for its rapid sale, so far exceeding his expectations, but from the extravagant encomiums of the Reviewers;" and on various other occasions it was the same. He ascribed the extensive sale of his productions to the undue partiality of public writers, or the extraordinary activity of his publishers, though it was difficult to keep any of them in print after their first appearance; and very few of them would ever have seen the light, but for the pressing solicitation of his friends. It is a well ascertained fact, that Mr. Hall was himself so little satisfied with any thing he published that he seldom allowed a copy to remain by him, much less to find a place in his library; and though in the habit of receiving from some of the most celebrated writers of the age, a copy of their works as soon as printed, in order to obtain his opinion, he was seldom known to make a present of his own in return, not thinking them deserving of their notice, nor having any in his possession to offer. He had fixed the standard of

literary excellence so very high, that he could see nothing but defects in all that he had written.

One who was personally acquainted with him, but of another denomination, has truly remarked, that "he would often undervalue his own compositions, and prefer others, and would sometimes even pertinaciously disagree with those who insinuated their admiration of his performances; but it was the pertinacity of humility, and resulted both from the influence which religion had over his mind, and that standard of perfection, that beau ideal in composition and discourse, which he had fixed in his mind, and which, great as he was, he felt to be unattainable." At the present period, while contemplating a new edition of Saurin's Dissertations, and of writing generally for the press, the estimate he formed of his own abilities is surely unparalleled:—he actually offered his literary services for little more than one hundred pounds a year!

The following letter shows how fully his mind was occupied with the idea of forming some literary engagement, to enable him to leave Cambridge, while at the same time it records the honourable feelings he entertained towards his friends in that place, and the devout gratitude he felt for the usefulness which had attended his labours. The constant recurrence of that single impression, that he must needs quit his situation, and go elsewhere in quest of tranquility, will probably be regarded as a sure indication that his exquisitely-toned mind

had already received some shock or injury, from which it was anxious to escape. There is also another affecting allusion to his disappointment in early life, as still contributing to his affliction.

*March 5th 1803.*

My dear Friend,

I duly received your favour, in which you inform me a translator has not been engaged, and that you are willing to abide by the first proposals made. It is now necessary for me to open my design more fully, the explanation of which will account for my change of resolution.

My intention is to leave Cambridge. From the first of my coming here I was impressed with a conviction, that it was not a situation I should choose to continue in for life. The face of the country is so extremely flat and disgusting as habitually to make an uncomfortable impression on my spirits. I am not unaware that a tendency to occasional depression is wrought pretty strongly into my constitution,\* not a little encreased by certain events in early youth, to which it is unnecessary to allude. From these causes, though I have met with more kindness and respect here than I deserved, I have never been able to feel myself at home in Cambridge.

It has frequently occurred to me that if ever I moved at all, I had arrived at that period beyond

\* Mr. Hall's pious Mother sunk under mental disease, but was again restored.

which the habits become too fixed to render a change of situation happy. I look back however with gratitude to the hand of providence which led me to Cambridge, as it has been by far the most useful period of my life. The church and congregation have been greatly encreased, and are now in so flourishing a state, and possessed of such a capacity of affording the most liberal support to a minister, as will make it a very eligible situation to any person who has not my particular objections.

My plan is at present then to retire into Devonshire, probably to Exeter, for at least a year: and if I should be able, with the blessing of God, to form a congregation there, it may induce me to abide there. If not, I shall be prepared to accept of such a situation as may offer. This being my plan, I shall find it necessary to draw a small sum every quarter, while the translation is proceeding.

With respect to Notes to the work, I can promise nothing. As I must necessarily be in an unsettled state at present, I should wish to defer entering on the translation till I have left Cambridge, which I purpose to do in two months, should you accede to what I have now mentioned. I rely on your keeping my intention of leaving Cambridge a secret, till you hear farther from me.

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.



In the following month, April, he took an excursion to Birmingham, and visited his friends in Leicestershire, still labouring under much depression. On his return to Cambridge he repeated his complaints of the monotonous scenery of the neighbourhood, which filled him with extreme disgust; it appeared to him like "nature laid out," and he must of necessity relinquish his situation. His friends entreated him not to entertain such an idea, and endeavoured to relieve his feelings by providing for him a comfortable dwellinghouse at Shelford, a small village four or five miles from Cambridge. He acknowledged that he had no fault to find with the people, he was much attached to them, and never expected to be more comfortable with any other congregation; but the locality still formed an insuperable objection.

The project for publishing a new translation of Saurin was soon afterwards given up, and the idea of leaving Cambridge somewhat subsided. But still requiring a change of scene, he took an excursion to Bristol in the following autumn, and exchanged a month's services with his highly-esteemed friend, the Rev. Samuel Lowell, minister of the Independent congregation in Bridge street, where he was immediately surrounded by his former friends, and met with the most cordial reception.

The country was at that time in a state of the utmost alarm; the treaty of peace so lately signed

had been violated, formidable preparations were made on the French coast for a descent on our shores, and every species of force was prepared to repel the invaders. A great variety of animated and patriotic effusions issued from the press, which raised the tone of the national spirit, and excited an unusual ardour for the preservation of public liberty. The government appointed the 19th of October 1803 as a public fast, and Mr. Hall was unexpectedly called upon to preach to a crowded congregation, consisting of a large proportion of military volunteers; and his great exertions did ample justice to the occasion. Much as he applauded the principles of the French revolution, he held in utter detestation the reckless scepticism of its principal agents, and the subsequent tyranny which trampled on the liberties of surrounding nations, though it had for its apology the plea of reprisal and of self-defence.

On the former of these topics he again takes occasion to expose the dangerous absurdity of the infidel philosophy, which resolves all virtue into general utility. Instead of appealing to any fixed or unalterable rule, it leaves everything to calculation, and determines everything by expediency; it reduces the most momentous principles to mere questions of interest, and regards even the scriptures as a spiritual ledger-book of profit and loss. The author mentions Hume as the first who broached this sceptical system, and laments that Dr. Paley, of whose writings he entertained a high

opinion, should have approximated so much towards it in his treatise on Moral Philosophy, and thereby afforded, though unintentionally, some countenance to a theory which if reduced to practice would shake the foundation of states, and endanger the existence of the civilized world.

The peroration of this discourse, on the "Present Crisis," in which the preacher appeared full of holy confidence, attracted the particular notice of some of the leading statesmen of the day, and was applauded by all good judges of composition. It blends at once the happiest recollections of the antique world, the dearest associations of british patriotism, and the pure spirit of the gospel, in a strain as noble and as eloquent as could have been poured out by any of the ancient orators. The passage itself has so often been quoted and admired, that a mere allusion to it will be deemed sufficient.

Turning to the military part of the audience, he in conclusion addressed to them the following spirited remarks. "As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the fœderal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine, under God, in what condition the latest posterity shall be born. Their fortunes are entrusted to your hand, and on your conduct at this moment depend the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the

continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall and wrapt in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilised world. Go then, ye defenders of your country, accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success, not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that



prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon, will grasp the sword of the Spirit; and from myriads of humble and contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms."

After reading such a sublime, such an affecting appeal as this, who can but lament that the greatest writer of the age should have contented himself with giving to the world scarcely any but fugitive and temporary publications, instead of engaging in some work of respectable magnitude and permanent interest, which would have charmed and edified succeeding generations. The paucity of his publications was however, in great measure, the result of physical causes, over which the will had no power; besides his extreme diffidence and reluctance to appear before the public, his inability to sustain the requisite position for writing, rendered it very doubtful whether he could have engaged in any extended or elaborate production. For a similar reason he was not in the habit of preparing his compositions for the pulpit; and if at any time he did so, he made no use of his notes at the time of delivery. His sermons were generally an extemporaneous effusion, the expansion of a few premeditated sentiments, well digested and arranged, and suited to the grasp of his intellect.

The sermon delivered at Bristol was not pub-

lished till six weeks afterwards, the preacher having to write the whole from memory after he returned to Shelford ; and so low an estimate had he formed of this splendid discourse, that he felt not a little surprised when a second edition was demanded. When he had revised it for the purpose of being reprinted, he remarked in the preface, that he had corrected the gross errors of the press by which it had been disfigured, “being desirous, ere it descended to that oblivion which is the natural exit of such publications, of presenting it for once in an amended form, that it may at least be decently interred.” One of the monthly periodicals, conducted by a friend, having given a very temperate review of the sermon, consisting of little more than a brief syllabus and a short quotation, the author expressed himself in the following manner, in a note to the editor, dated Feb. 14th 1804. “Your review of my sermon displays considerable ability, but is too encomiastic. I was really ashamed to read it. I thank the unknown author for his good opinion, though I wish him to reduce it within more reasonable bounds.”

## SECTION X.

A. D. 1804—1806.

THE late excursion to Bristol, and the warm congratulations of numerous friends, appear to have had a beneficial influence on Mr. Hall's health and spirits; and on his retiring to the village of Shelford, he passed several months in tolerable tranquility. But in the following summer of 1804, there were renewed symptoms of disquietude, and an encreasing anxiety to abandon his situation and engagements. Early one morning he arose and walked to Cambridge, called up one of his friends, took a bed there, and slept to a late hour of the day, having been unable to procure any rest for several nights before.

Returning again to Shelford he was visited by the late Dr. Thackeray, who was anxious to ascertain the nature of his disorder, and prescribe for his relief. On his arrival he met with a singular reception. Mr. Hall took the bible, read a chapter, and remarked on the propriety and importance, on all occasions, of seeking counsel and direction from God, wishing at the same time to impress on the mind of his visitant such religious instruction

as he thought needful. He then engaged in prayer with such sublime and elevated feelings, accompanied with so many striking and appropriate allusions to the moral and religious state of his medical friend, that it overwhelmed him with reverence and awe, and he scarcely knew what to say to so extraordinary a patient. When Mr. Hall complained of a most distressing pain in the head, as if girted and oppressed with an insufferable weight, the physician endeavoured to soothe his anguish by reminding him it would one day be exchanged for ‘a weight of glory,’ when there would be no more pain and no more death. At a subsequent visit it was judged necessary to adopt more decisive measures for the recovery of his health.

The disorder was long in coming to a crisis, but short in its duration. On Nov. 11th 1804, he was placed under the superintendence of a physician at Leicester. Mr. Fuller, on hearing that he passed through Kettering that evening, exclaimed with deep emotion, Oh what a stroke is this! The eclipse of such a luminary, though but transient, shrouded the religious hemisphere with gloom and darkness; many prayers were offered up for his speedy restoration, and the desired blessing was not long delayed. “The estimation in which he was held was expressed by the deep and universal sympathy with which his case was regarded, not only in the congregation and town of Cambridge, but in the university and the surrounding country, as well as among his friends at a distance. Intense



agony pervaded the minds of all who knew him ; enquiries after his health were perpetual, and from all quarters ; every one felt and acted as though a near relative, or bosom friend, were in immediate and extreme danger." During the seclusion a weekly bulletin was transmitted to his friends at Cambridge, who watched the progress of the disease with the utmost solicitude ; " and if any stranger had wished to learn the ardour of the affection which was borne towards Mr. Hall, he needed only to witness the intense anxiety with which these accounts were listened to, when they were read from the pulpit at the close of the morning service."\*

Signs of convalescence appeared in little more than a month, and one circumstance is said to have been highly conducive to that end, which by the innocent and rational amusement it afforded, tended to secure a larger portion of tranquility than might otherwise have been possessed. It so happened that another patient, a Mr. Bentley, proved an agreeable and interesting companion, from his having long been accustomed to the study of botany. Mr. Hall often walked in the garden with this gentleman, who pointed out the various species and properties of plants and flowers ; while the other descanted upon their beauties with devout emotion, interspersing his remarks with moral and religious reflections, tending to inspire an adoration of the Parent of all good. These conversations are said

\* Mr. Bosworth's Discourse.

to have been enriched with some of the loftiest conceptions that ever entered the human mind, though unfortunately they have all vanished with the fragrant forms that gave them birth.

This eminent man was restored to himself and to society on the 19th of February 1805, when he was received by a deputation of his kind and generous friends, who had arrived from Cambridge for that purpose. To diminish as much as possible the sudden excitement of so inspiring an interview, the medical superintendent immediately threw open a new and splendid atlas, to which the attention of all the parties was directed, and a happy degree of equanimity preserved. They then drove into the vicinity for an airing, and Mr. Hall took up his abode with his sister at Leicester, intending in a few days to visit his native village for the re-establishment of his health.

A week after the interesting interview had been enjoyed, Mr. Hall wrote the following letter to an intimate friend, expressing his devout gratitude for confirmed and still improving health, his renewed and earnest desire of devoting himself to the service and glory of God, and his hope of speedily resuming his ministerial labours at Cambridge.

*Leicester, Feb. 26th 1805.*

My dear Friend,

I thought it would be some satisfaction to you to hear that I continue, through the blessing of God, perfectly well. My health, through divine mercy, was never better; nor can I be sufficiently thankful to that

good providence which has recovered me from the gates of death. Motives for gratitude crowd in upon me on every side, and the most I have to complain of is that my heart is so little alive to their impression. When we look back upon past life, what a series of evidences present themselves, of a presiding and parental care. With what propriety may we adopt the language of David: 'Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with lovingkindnesses and with tender mercies.' I am more and more convinced that nothing deserves to be called *life* that is not devoted to the service of God, and that piety is the only true wisdom. But alas, how difficult is it to get these lessons deeply impressed on the heart, and wrought into the whole habit of the mind.

I have not yet been to Arnsby, but shall go there in a day or two, and propose to spend about ten days there; and shall probably visit Cambridge in little more than a fortnight. My spirits are rather low, but my mind is composed, and in some measure resigned to the leading and conduct of divine providence. The narrow bounds of my experience have furnished me with such a conviction of the vanity of this world, and the illusion of its prospects, that I indulge no eager hopes. If God enable me to do some little good, and preserve me from great calamities, it will be enough, and infinitely more than I deserve; for I have been, in the most emphatic sense of the word, 'an unprofitable servant.'

I am, my dear sir, yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

After reposing a short time at Arnsby, Mr. Hall returned to Cambridge on the 16th of March, ac-

accompanied by his endeared and constant friend, Mr. Toller of Kettering, who preached for him the following sabbath, and administered the Lord's supper; this was to Mr. Hall a season of great refreshment and delight. During Mr. Hall's short stay at Kettering, on his way to Cambridge, an affecting circumstance was developed. Mr. Toller passing behind him, and casting his eyes on the elegantly formed head of his afflicted friend, observed the scars of some recent contusions, and gently enquired the cause. They are the wounds, said the sufferer, which I lately received in the house of my friends! Mr. Toller wept when the explanation was given; to a few others the same disclosure was made, and all lamented the highly dishonourable conduct of those who had violated so sacred a trust.

Mr. Hall gradually resumed his labours amongst a people who well knew how to appreciate their value and importance, and who with the utmost liberality provided, not only for all the expenses attendant on the late seclusion, but as far as possible for any future contingency, which might possibly render him incapable of his official duties. The friends at Cambridge, aided by some in London, in Bristol, and other places, in the most handsome manner secured to him a life annuity, with some reversionary interest, in order to render his circumstances comparatively comfortable and independent, and which in all probability contributed to prolong the tranquility of his future life.



The recent affliction and recovery were attended with the happiest effects; a deeper tone of piety was diffused into his devotional exercises, increasing zeal and fervour marked his pulpit addresses, while a growing attachment to the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and a more vivid sense of their importance, were becoming more and more evident; qualities which did not fail to give additional interest and efficacy to his ministry, and rivet the affectionate attention of his hearers. The sun of righteousness and truth now shone with a brighter splendour, and the opening prospect encouraged the liveliest hope of more extensive usefulness.

Unhappily, this scene of enchantment was to be again beclouded, and a veil drawn over the fairest prospects. In less than six months it was perceived that his mighty faculties were once more giving way, and reason tottered on its throne. He forgot the return of the sabbath, made no preparation for its services, and could scarcely be found when he was to enter the pulpit, with numerous other aberrations. A temporary seclusion was again necessary; and on the 26th of Nov. 1805, about twelve months after the first attack, he was placed under the care of a medical gentleman at the Fishponds, near Bristol. This recurrence of the disorder, though severe, was very short. After a few days only, the patient found himself comparatively well; and nearly from the commencement to the termination of the disorder there

occurred no material interruption of his mental and religious exercises; a calm reliance and humble confidence in God prevailed over every other sentiment and feeling.

Previous to this illness Mr. Hall contracted the habit of smoking, of which he was remarkably fond, and thought it tended a little to relieve the pain he so constantly endured. A curious colloquy arose out of this circumstance soon after his admission, which shows his ingenuity in endeavouring to obtain the privilege of a pipe, and the severity of his sarcasms when provoked by disappointment. Being invited to dine with the medical gentleman, in company with other convalescents, he on the first day said, Do you know sir which is the finest *plant* in all the universe? The doctor answered no, he did not know; he had not devoted much time or attention to botany. Do *you* know which it is, Mr. Hall? Yes, yes, he quickly replied; that is easily discovered—it is tobacco, certainly. The hint did not take effect, and he remained silent and dejected all that day. On the next opportunity he renewed the enquiry. Doctor, do you know the finest *scent* that ever accosted the nostrils of man? I cannot tell you immediately: but is it snuff, Mr. Hall? Snuff, snuff! No, no, sir; it is the fume of tobacco. Having received no favourable answer, he continued silent the remainder of the day. These attempts to obtain a pipe proving unsuccessful, he the next time put the question in still plainer terms. Doctor, do you

ever smoke? No, certainly not, was the reply. Then sir, you are an object of profound compassion and commiseration. Why doctor, you are destitute of the finest of our *six* senses. The doctor politely thanked him, but assured him he needed not his compassion. Mr. Hall, attempting to justify his remark, replied, Why sir, would you not pity a man who had not the sense of seeing, hearing, or smelling? And as you have not the sense of smoking, you are an object of the profoundest pity and compassion. On the fourth day he openly requested the favour of a pipe, and could take no rest till he had obtained it. But he received for answer, You have been long enough in this establishment to know, sir, that the rules do not allow of smoking. I have: and what is the reason for that, doctor? Because, replied the doctor, it was thought to have a tendency to encrease the malady which prevails in this house. No, no, was responded; that indeed is not the reason. The true reason is, because the president of this establishment is a great blockhead!

Mr. Hall's propensity for smoking encreased so much upon him after this period, that he might be found occupied with a pipe most hours of the day. In his own apprehension the sedative effects of tobacco were beneficial to his health, tending to alleviate that incessant pain under which he laboured, or in some measure to divert his attention from it. A friend having presented him with a portable and capacious box for the purpose, he

seldom went from home without providing himself with an ample store of kynaster; and even when travelling outside a coach, which he commonly preferred, a pipe was frequently his companion. Unable to continue long in bed, from the encreasing pain it produced, he was in the habit of rising very early, lying down on the hard floor, and amusing himself with a pipe and a book. One dark winter's morning his candle went out; and as he could nowhere be found about the house, the family became alarmed; but just as some were going out with a lantern to search for him he made his appearance, saying he had traversed the streets to find a watchman to light his pipe; so essential was this little indulgence to his personal comfort. He took nothing whatever with his pipe, but swallowed the saliva as a sort of medicine.

After recovering from his second illness, and before he had finally quitted the medical asylum, Mr. Hall addressed the following letter to an intimate friend in the vicinity of Cambridge, distinguished like the former, by feelings of devout adoration for his great deliverance, mingled with sentiments of deep submission, and a conviction that he should not be able again to return to the people of his charge, nor for the present to resume the ministry. Happily, though compelled to relinquish his former engagements he was enabled, after a short time, gradually to commence preaching, under circumstances which singularly marked the hand of providence.



*Feb. 1st 1806.*

My dear Friend,

Accept my sincere thanks for your kind letter. Every assurance of respect from old friends, and especially from one whose friendship has been so long tried, and evinced on so many occasions, must afford much satisfaction to a person in my situation. Though providence has produced a separation, which will probably be of long continuance (and in one sense final) nothing I am certain can efface from my mind those impressions of gratitude and esteem with which I shall ever look back on my connections at Cambridge and its vicinity. With the deepest submission I wish to bow to that awful, yet I trust, paternal power which, when it pleases, confounds all human hopes, and lays us prostrate in the dust. It is for Him to dispose of his creatures as he pleases; and if they be willing and obedient, to work out their happiness, though by methods the most painful and afflictive. His plans are infinitely extended, and his measures determined by views of that ultimate issue, that final result, which transcends our comprehension.

It is with the sincerest gratitude I would acknowledge the goodness of God in restoring me. I am, as far as I can judge, as remote from any thing wild and irregular in the state of my mind as I ever was in my life; though I think, owing probably to the former encreased excitation, I feel some abatement of vigour. My mind seems inert. During my affliction I have not been entirely forsaken of God, nor left destitute of that calm trust in his providence which was requisite to support me: yet I have not been favoured with that intimate communion, and that delightful sense of his love, which I have enjoyed on former occasions. I have seldom been without a degree of composure, though I have had little consolation or joy. Such, with little variation, has been my mental state, very

nearly from the time of my coming to the Fishponds; for I had not been here more than a fortnight before I found myself perfectly recovered, though my pulse continued too high. It has long subsided, and exhibits, the doctor assures me, every indication of confirmed health.

With respect to my future prospects and plans, they are necessarily in a state of great uncertainty. I am fully convinced of the propriety of relinquishing my pastoral charge at Cambridge, which I shall do, in an official letter to the church, as soon as I leave Dr. Cox, which I believe will be at the expiration of the quarter from my coming. My return to Cambridgeshire was, I am convinced, extremely ill judged; nor had I the smallest intention of doing it, until I was acquainted with the generous interposition of my friends, to which it appeared to me that my declining to live among them would seem a most ungrateful return. I most earnestly request that they will do me the justice to believe, the intention I have named, of declining the pastoral charge, does not proceed from any such motive, but from the exigencies of my situation, and a sense of duty. I propose to lay aside preaching for at least a twelvemonth.

I am, my dear sir,  
Your affectionate and obliged Friend,  
ROBERT HALL.

Previous to leaving the medical institution at Bristol, and amidst his grateful adorations for the recent deliverance, Mr. Hall received the afflictive intelligence of the sudden death of his only brother, Mr. John Hall, farmer and grazier at Arnsby, and father of the highly esteemed Mr. John Hall, who succeeded Mr. Fuller in the

pastoral office at Kettering. Under this painful and unexpected bereavement, the subject of this memoir found relief in the hopes he entertained of the genuine piety and future felicity of his departed relative, though as is usual with susceptible minds in such cases, he felt a poignant regret at not having manifested towards him more abundant and convincing proofs of his fraternal affection and regard. Never are we so sensible of our deficiency in relative duties as when they can no longer be discharged, nor of the value of a friend till we have lost him.

‘Our mercies brighten as they take their flight.’

The friends at Cambridge were naturally anxious for Mr. Hall’s return, had it been safe or expedient for him to have done so; but he could not venture again to occupy a station which had twice proved so fatal to his health and comfort. All he could engage for was to pay them an annual visit, an engagement which he punctually fulfilled, as far as health and other circumstances would permit. Necessarily compelled to relinquish the charge of a congregation who had entitled themselves to his affection and esteem, he addressed to them a letter full of apostolic wisdom and simplicity, reflecting equal lustre upon his own character, and honour on the society to which it was addressed; and though it has already appeared in print, it was previously prepared, with several others, for insertion in this work, and is too intimately connected with the narrative to be omitted.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT CAMBRIDGE, OF THE  
BAPTIST DENOMINATION.

March 4th 1806.

My dear Brethren,

A succession of afflictive dispensations has brought me to the resolution of resigning the pastoral office, which I have for a considerable number of years exercised among you.

I cannot reflect on the numberless and decisive proofs you have afforded me of your attachment during that period, without the warmest gratitude, nor think of a final separation without regret. No people ever received the ministerial services of their pastor with more candour, or evinced on every occasion a greater solicitude to contribute to his happiness.

It is not necessary to dwell at large on the circumstances which have determined me to relinquish the situation I have so long held. They are partly *local*, in the strictest sense of the word, and in part arise from my recent illness, which suggests the propriety of suspending the ministerial functions for the present. The dissolution of that union which has subsisted with such uninterrupted harmony is the work of providence, whose operations are often mysterious, but always infinitely wise and gracious.

Permit me, my dear brethren, at parting with you, to express the deep and unalterable sense I shall ever feel, of the candour, kindness and generosity, I have uniformly experienced at your hands. You will ever have a distinguished place in my affections and my prayers. It is my earnest desire that the truth it has been my humble endeavour to inculcate among you, may take deeper and deeper root in your hearts and lives, that you may obey from the heart that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered. May our separation not be final and eternal, but may we be so



preserved and sanctified by the influence of divine grace, that when the transitory days of our mortal pilgrimage are concluded, we may be permitted to spend a blissful eternity together.

Let me make it my earnest request, that you will be careful to choose a minister whose heart is truly devoted to God, and who is determined, like the great apostle, to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. That your faith may encrease exceedingly, and your love one towards another abound more and more, till you arrive unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and are presented before him unblameable in holiness, is the habitual and earnest prayer of

Your late unworthy pastor and affectionate friend,

ROBERT HALL.

These sentiments and feelings were affectionately reciprocated by the congregation, who bore testimony to the fidelity and efficacy of his ministrations, and the substantial benefit they had derived from them, while they deplored a loss which must have appeared to them irreparable. They at the same time expressed a desire that the ardent friendship which subsisted between them might continue throughout their mortal existence, and gather fresh strength by every future interview, and their conviction that it would survive the grave and be perpetuated to immortal ages. Thus terminated a connection, the happiest perhaps that Mr. Hall had ever formed, and certainly one which he had sustained with the highest honour and usefulness.

Sir James Mackintosh, it has been observed, was at King's College, Aberdeen, in 1780, and there contracted an intimacy with our lamented friend, which continued to the end of life. The professional attainments of this gentleman, combined with an extensive knowledge of polite literature, rendered him in Mr. Hall's esteem one of the most accomplished writers of the age. Sir James had signalised himself by a masterly defence of the French revolution, and was altogether too formidable to be overlooked by an unreformed and unreforming ministry. The government therefore attempted to conciliate, if not to neutralise, this powerful advocate of civil and religious liberty, by appointing him to a high judicial situation in India, in the year 1803. The painful intelligence of Mr. Hall's first illness reached him soon after his arrival at Bombay, and produced that corresponding sympathy which great and generous minds bear towards one another. Sir James evidently misconceived the cause of his friend's mental aberration, and the transcendant genius of christianity, by imputing it to the intensity of devout and religious feeling which had previously been indulged; but the letter is written with so much elegance, and with such a flow of kind and benevolent feeling, that it will long be remembered and referred to as an effusion of the most ardent and honourable friendship, though its repeated appearance in print prevents its intended insertion in this place.

## SECTION XI.

A. D. 1806, 1807.

THE circumstances which brought Mr. Hall to Leicester were altogether unpremeditated. As soon as he recovered from the second attack he went thither on a visit to his sister Mrs. Cotton, immediately on his leaving the vicinity of Bristol, in February 1806, having no other object in view than a seclusion from public engagements for the benefit of his health. Continuing at Leicester for several months, he usually attended the baptist meeting in Harvey Lane, with but little expectation of resuming the ministry. Making no arrangements for the future, he was happy in the assurance that ‘all his times were in the hand of the Lord;’ he therefore endeavoured, as he said, to abandon himself entirely to divine direction.

Much of his time was spent in the duties of retirement, in the cultivation of holy affections, and seeking communion with God. With what still encreasing ardour he cherished an attachment to those important truths he had been accustomed to deliver, and with what unfeigned humility he still reflected on his past labours in the ministry,

may be seen in an extract of a letter of exquisite tenderness, addressed to an esteemed friend at Cambridge, during this season of retirement.

——“Your congratulations on my recovery affect and humble me, as I am perfectly conscious of my not deserving the hundredth part of the esteem they imply. If my ministry has been at all blessed, as the means of spiritual good to your soul, God alone is entitled to the praise. I have been, in every sense of the word, an unprofitable servant. When I consider the value of souls, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and the weight of eternal things, I am ashamed and astonished to think I could have spoken of such subjects with so little impression, and that I did not travail in birth more, till Christ was formed in my hearers. I have no plea for my negligence, no hope of pardon, but what is founded on that atonement and intercession I have endeavoured, though so very faintly, to recommend to others. Every fresh experience of life convinces me, more and more, of the truth and importance of the doctrines I have preached; and blessed be God, I am sometimes favoured with some experimental taste of their sweetness. As often as I look back on such seasons I am ready to exclaim,

‘Where can such sweetness be,  
As I have tasted in thy love,  
As I have found in thee!’”

As Mr. Hall's health and spirits gradually improved, he at length complied with the earnest



importunities of several persons in the neighbourhood to pay them a visit, and with all lowliness of mind recommenced his ministry in some of the adjacent villages. He took so much delight in these humble efforts to do good, that he wished to have extended them much farther, had his physical strength permitted; but they were limited and suspended by the severe pain which he frequently endured. A friend one day expressing his surprise that he should engage in such excursions, in preaching to persons who it was conceived would scarcely be able to understand him, he quickly replied, "You are greatly mistaken sir. Poor and illiterate people can always understand a better style than they are able to command, and I am quite satisfied that the villagers very well comprehend my preaching." He also remarked at another time, that as language was the mere vehicle of thought, "the test of a good style was its perfect transparency; it would be like the purest water, free from every extraneous mixture." And it is truly astonishing that so many admirers and imitators of this great orator, should so utterly have misconceived the distinguishing quality of his style, which was that of a most lucid and elegant simplicity, as to substitute for its representative a flippant and palling verbosity, a gorgeousness of diction inflated with numerous unmeaning epithets. With him there was seldom a word to spare, or one that could with advantage be exchanged; yet it has unfortunately given rise to a

species of pulpit oratory the very reverse of all this, and adapted to any purpose rather than that of imparting instruction on the most sacred of all subjects. Mr. Hall indeed himself said, "I am afraid that a vicious taste is gaining ground, both among preachers and hearers: all glare and point, little to the understanding, and nothing to the heart."

It must however have been an interesting spectacle, to have seen and heard this extraordinary man, after having addressed his absorbing eloquence to 'ears polite,' and entranced the literati of the university and town of Cambridge, traversing the villages of Leicestershire for the pious and benevolent purpose of preaching to the poor and illiterate the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yet nothing can be more illustrative of the true character of an apostolic minister, who, laden with these riches, feels himself 'a debtor both to the wise and to the unwise,' and who knows no other end of life but that of living for the good of others and to the glory of God.

Needing more repose than could be found in a large and populous town, he removed in the beginning of January 1807 to the secluded but finely situated village of Enderby, five miles south of Leicester, where he took apartments at the house of an elderly lady, long acquainted with his family. The beneficial effects of his late affliction, and the profound submission to the divine will which it

produced in his mind, are pathetically expressed in a letter to a friend, written at that period. "My times, says he, are in the hand of God; and my chief solicitude, if I do not greatly deceive myself, is to please him in all things who is entitled to all my love, and infinitely more than all if possible; and who is indeed my covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus. I do not at all regret my past afflictions, severe as they have been, but am persuaded they were wisely and mercifully ordered. I preach most sabbaths, though at no one place statedly, and have found considerable pleasure in my work. I have little or no plan for the future, but endeavour to abandon myself to the divine direction. All I have to lament is, the want of more nearness to God, and a heart more entirely filled with his love, and devoted to his service."

There being at that time no dissenting place of worship at Enderby, Mr. Hall sometimes went to the parish church. On his first appearance, the rustic manners of the church-going people, who generally like to sit in solitary pews, wrapped in their freize and corduroy, did not permit their bestowing any other attention upon the stranger than a vacant stare; and he accordingly placed himself on a bench in the aisle among the poorest of the people. The clergyman who officiated on that occasion, whether he knew him or not, perceived the gracefulness of his mien and aspect, and felt much disconcerted in observing the situation he occupied, till at length, unable to proceed, he

directed the clerk to conduct him to a pew. Mr. Hall reluctantly accepted the offer, and did it only to relieve the clergyman from his embarrassment.

Being repeatedly solicited by a few pious persons in the village, he began at first to preach a little at the house where he lodged, and was heard with deep attention; but he still laboured under great discouragement and an enfeebled state of health. Finding also that a truly pious minister was afterwards appointed to the curacy of the parish he very soon desisted, saying there was no farther need of his services. Willing also to countenance the labours of all good men, he renewed his attendance at church, and heard the preaching with much satisfaction; but with all his candour and liberality he became at length so weary of the formal repetitions of the liturgy and other ceremonies that he felt compelled to retire, saying that "if he had not been a dissenter before, he should be one now, and should continue a dissenter to all eternity." He soon cultivated an acquaintance with the excellent Mr. Cooke, minister of the pædobaptist congregation in the neighbouring village of Narborough, where he often attended on the sabbath, and preached occasionally. He likewise employed part of his time in directing the studies of a young man preparing for the ministry, who was afterwards settled over a baptist church in the west of England.

His state of health did not admit of much exertion; the almost incessant pain in his back,



erroneously supposed to have arisen from some vertebral malformation, encreased and aggravated by some unperceived injury in early life, seemed to exhaust his strength and spirits. It was observed however, that when there was an accession of mental disease, the pain in the lumbar region greatly subsided, and was seemingly transferred to the branular system; but when this was removed, the pain returned to its original position. This became so habitual that the patient sufferer used to say, he scarcely remembered an hour in his life when he was entirely free from pain; that when he was comparatively easy he felt more than was generally imagined, and when the agony returned he could compare it to nothing, as he conceived, but to the pangs attendant upon parturition. While at Enderby he availed himself of the surgical advice of the celebrated Dr. Kerr of Northampton, who said on inspection that it was not so easy to determine what the disorder really was, as what it was not. It appeared however to have originated chiefly in a derangement of the lumbar nerves, and formed a species of neuralgia or tic doloreaux. Very powerful caustics were applied, followed with a seton on the part affected; and after suffering severely from long-continued dressings, he obtained only a very partial relief. During the paroxysms of the disorder nothing afforded ease but the copious use of opium, and he could obtain very little rest or sleep without it. The habit of course encreased upon him, so that he

was afterwards accustomed to purchase a pint or more of laudanum at a time, and to take a wine-glass full at a single dose, but without any apparent inconvenience; and when reminded by some medical friends that the habit would be injurious, he replied, no, by no means, his general health had sustained no injury from it whatever; and though such a practice might be generally prejudicial, it was as congenial to his constitution as the chewing of opium was to that of a Turk.

During his seclusion at Enderby, almost entirely without society, he spent much of his time in private devotion, and not unfrequently set apart whole days for prayer and fasting, a practice which he continued to the end of life, deeming it essential to the revival and preservation of personal religion. When able to walk he wandered in the fields, and sought the shady grove, which often echoed with the voice of prayer, and witnessed the agony of his supplications. He was frequently so absorbed in these sacred exercises as to be unaware of the approach of persons passing by, many of whom recollect with deep emotion the fervour and importunity of his addresses at the mercy seat, and the groanings which could not be uttered. His whole soul appears indeed to have been in a state of constant communion with God, his lonely walks amid the woodland scenery were rendered subservient to that end, and all his paths were bedewed with the tears of penitential prayer. In one instance he met with a mortifying disappoint-

ment, which no one could have anticipated. Admiring at a distance the grounds and plantations of a neighbouring gentleman, he politely craved permission, for the sake of greater privacy, to extend his walks over the enchanting spot,—and was denied; aristocratic pride having no sympathy with intellectual or moral greatness, and no capacity for estimating its value or importance.

To this interesting period there appears to be a very tender allusion in one of his posthumous sermons, where he observes that it is “the privilege of the faithful to enjoy that union and alliance with the Father of spirits, through his Son, by virtue of which they become one spirit. They are, at some favoured seasons, so filled, even to overflowing, with a sense of his love, that the wilderness appears more beautiful than the peopled city. At such seasons, though all evils that afflict the flesh may attempt to assail the immortal mind, he can be so present to the heart, and impart to the soul such ecstasies of enjoyment, as will more than overpower the violence of pain, and even prevail over the agonies of death.”

As soon as it was known that Mr. Hall had begun to preach a little in that quarter, several applications were made for his occasional assistance; and one of his earliest visits was paid to the congregation at Clipstone, at that time destitute of a pastor. The people having known and loved him from his youth up, were well aware of his eminent abilities; and highly as they thought

themselves honoured by his friendship, they never indulged the hope of obtaining his stated services, though it afterwards appeared, when too late, that he would at that time have preferred such a retired situation for the unostentatious exercise of his ministry, and secretly wished to take up his abode with that pious and affectionate people. Providence having greater designs in view, prevented the accomplishment of this desire, and prepared for him a much larger and more public sphere of action than an obscure village could by any means afford. Yet if his wishes had in this respect been gratified, it is probable the world would have had less reason to complain of the paucity of his publications; for in the public spheres which he was necessarily called to occupy, so large a demand was made upon his time and attention as to leave him but little opportunity for literary pursuits. In almost every instance he was compelled to withdraw from the centre of the population into the vicinity, to secure to himself the hours of retirement necessary to his devotional and ministerial engagements, and oftentimes to refuse admittance to numerous individuals who called upon him from all parts of the country: such indeed is the tax generally levied upon men of eminence.

Amidst these partial movements the friends at Leicester watched every opportunity of engaging his services, and now and then prevailed on him to preach for them; but as they had at that time



a stated minister, Mr. Hall reluctantly complied. The congregation being in a very low and declining state, they deputed two of their deacons to wait on Mr. Hall for counsel and advice, and to intimate the need there was of his labouring more frequently among them, in the hope of reviving a cause now ready to expire. He listened to their statements with some surprise, lamented the unsuccessful efforts of their minister, and with that magnanimity which characterised all his actions, declined taking any ostensible part in the ministry among them, until some suitable situation could be provided for the retiring pastor.

About the same time his friends at Arnsby affectionately invited him to labour among them, and he remained for a while undecided. The congregation at Harvey Lane was much the smallest of the two, but the surrounding population presented a wider field of usefulness, alloyed indeed with the recollection that Leicester had been the seat of his deepest affliction. Arnsby presented many attractions; it was the scene of his earliest days, where he had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and was now the place of his father's sepulchre; here also he would have found that seclusion which was so congenial to his prevailing taste and feelings, and so peculiarly adapted to restore his mental vigour amidst his recent infirmities. In the meanwhile he continued his visits to Leicester to preach part of the sabbath; and as the pastor was gradually withdrawn,

he was left in possession of the pulpit almost unaware, and declined of course the invitation of his friends at Arnsby. The people at Leicester were glad to obtain him on any terms, and Mr. Hall was no less gratified with the expression of their respect and kindness, especially, as he used afterwards to remark, they were the *first* to give him a permanent invitation, after his mental affliction, excepting his highly-esteemed friends at Cambridge, with whose wishes he was unable to comply.

Mr. Hall continued still at Enderby, but commenced his stated labours at Leicester, October 7th 1807. He generally went on horseback, a mode of travelling to which he was very partial; and having preached at Harvey Lane in the morning and afternoon, he returned in the same manner to Enderby in the evening. He entered on his work with feelings deeply chastened and frequently depressed; and though he preached the doctrine of the cross ‘in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,’ he evidently met the engagement ‘in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.’ His natural diffidence at all times operated no small degree of discouragement, but after his mental relapse he became so abased in his own eyes, so prostrate and self-annihilated, that he scarcely presumed to hope for permanent acceptance or success in any quarter; and when in a short time his hearers were so multiplied that an enlargement of the place was found necessary, he repeatedly

resisted the proposal, from an apprehension that he should not be able to keep up the congregation, and that a heavy and inconvenient expense would unnecessarily be incurred.

Gradually recovering his mental vigour, he visited Kettering and Nottingham in the course of the following summer, to advocate the cause of the baptist mission in India; and his ministry assuming more and more a decidedly evangelical character, he was heard with rapturous delight. At home also he preached the annual sermon for the same object, to an overflowing congregation, yet he still laboured under much discouragement. The church in Harvey Lane was greatly revived by his ministry, many were added to their number, and great attention was excited; still his ardent desire for usefulness was far from being gratified, and he deeply lamented the want of more success. A crowded and admiring audience dwelling upon his lips, was no substitute for the conversion of sinners to God; and nothing short of this could satisfy him of his call to the ministry, or carry him forward in his work.

Seldom has there been such an instance of sanctified affliction as appeared in the spirit and deportment, in the devotional habits and public labours of this eminent man. After this final restoration, and resumption of the sacred office, he gave himself up to the Lord in the most solemn manner, and in the humblest form of devotement. Not content with spending a considerable part of

every day in meditation and prayer, he would often rise in the night, or before the morning dawn, to prostrate himself on the ground ; and in that posture for a length of time he offered prayer and supplication for divine support and success in the work of the ministry, and that those renovated powers which he had consecrated to the Lord might be sustained and wholly devoted to his glory.

Though the reality of his conversion, even in infancy, and his habitual piety through life, admitted of no reasonable doubt, yet he was often exercised with painful apprehensions upon the subject, and gave himself up to self-examination and prayer. In conversation with a friend he anxiously enquired what might be considered as the surest test of true conversion, and whether it did not consist in habitual delight in God ; remarking at the same time, that amidst all his disquietude he did not remember a period in his life when he delighted not in God supremely, and sought communion with him as the source of his highest enjoyment ; but was apprehensive that he either had exhibited or might be left to exhibit the most fearful proofs of apostasy, and that his perseverance to the end appeared to himself extremely doubtful. Whatever of natural infirmity might be mixed up with these painful feelings, it cannot be doubted that the deep impression he now had of the unsullied purity and glory of the divine nature enlarged his conceptions of the evil of sin, and magnified his own frailties



to such a degree as nearly to absorb every other feeling, and put to flight all his former hopes. His soul was in close and constant intercourse with the Father of spirits, and he learned the lesson of humility and self-abasement in the presence of Him, before whom all intellectual greatness and moral excellence vanish into nothing.

Desirous above all things to be preserved from every species of self-deception, and to be led into the truth as it is in Jesus, he carefully reviewed his religious principles, and laid himself fully open to the power of conviction. On no one subject was he more solicitous than on that which relates to the divine personality of the Holy Spirit, and his direct agency in the economy of redemption, a doctrine which he had held doubtful in the former part of his ministry, and which might in some degree have impaired his usefulness, though he never at any time denied the actual existence or necessity of divine influence. On this vital point he searched the scriptures with renewed diligence, and a humble reliance on divine teaching. During these solemn exercises, accompanied with fervent prayer, his difficulties were happily removed; he arrived at the fullest satisfaction respecting the personal agency of the Holy Spirit, the evidence being to him so clear and indubitable as to leave no longer any ground for hesitation; and certain it is, from that time, a greater unction seemed to rest upon his labours, and his dependence on divine influence became more evident and habitual. His attachment

to the doctrines of grace, and his utter aversion from whatever derogated from the essential dignity of the Saviour and the efficacy of his atonement, encreased with his growing spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; and the good effects of his ministry became every day more apparent.

Notwithstanding his ardent and conscientious attachment to truth, Mr. Hall was not a disciplinarian; he was less mindful of accustomed forms than the strictest orthodoxy would require. In removing from one christian community to another he omitted the ordinary practice of dissenting churches, of giving and receiving letters of dismission and recommendation, not from any particular dislike, but probably from forgetfulness or indifference, considering ecclesiastical etiquette of little importance, apart from the attainment of some moral or beneficial purpose. His general manner was to become a practical communicant in the churches he occasionally visited, or permanently served; and when at different times invited to the pastoral office, he deemed the call of the people amply sufficient, without any other recognition.

It is true, at a later period of life, he regretted that he had not been publicly ordained, and admitted that his procedure had been somewhat irregular; but considering ordination as prospective only, it could be of no avail after the actual assumption of the pastoral office. The admitted

irregularity however was such only in reference to modern practice, for in the earliest ages the election of a pastor was wholly vested in the members of the church, and his induction to the office was conceded by their own presbyters and elders, accompanied with imposition of hands and solemn prayer. The concurrence of neighbouring pastors was only occasional, and was considered merely as an expression of their fraternity; their direct and official interference would not have been admitted. If the first pastors were appointed, under the superintendence of the apostles, it was because they were the first, and because the apostles only could decide upon the necessary qualifications; the rule being given, and churches organised by their direction, served as an example to all others, and to all succeeding times, without the interference of any foreign aid or authority. If proper persons are set apart to the pastoral office, by the free election of the church and the recognition of their elders, the concurrence of other ministers is a mere circumstance, no way affecting the validity of the appointment.

“That the people had in the first ages,” says Mr. Hall, “a large share in ecclesiastical proceedings, and that their officers were chosen by themselves, is incontrovertibly evident, as well from scripture, as from the authentic monuments of antiquity. The epistles of St. Cyprian, to go no farther, are as full in proof of this point, as if they had been written on purpose to establish it. The

transfer of power, first from the people to their ministers, and afterwards from them to the bishop of Rome, was a gradual work, not fully accomplished till many centuries had elapsed from the christian era. Until the conversion of Constantine, the christian church was a spiritual republic, subsisting in the midst of the Roman empire, on which it was completely independent; and its most momentous affairs were directed by popular suffrage.”\*

Admitting however the convenience and propriety of the modern practice, to prevent as far as possible the intrusion of improper persons into the sacred office, a purpose indeed which it very rarely effects, it surely will not be alleged that it is in all cases alike necessary. In that alluded to it would at least have had a most onerous appearance, for a number of ministers of different grades to be summoned together for the purpose of conceding to *him* their suffrages, of inducting him to the pastoral office, and charging him with their instructions for the fulfilment of its duties; though it is believed he himself would not have objected, had it been proposed; nor would there have been any lack of ecclesiastical power and authority, if the imposing ceremony had required it. The simple truth is, Mr. Hall did not think himself of sufficient consequence to demand so much public attention, nor that the quiet and unostentatious connection he had formed with the church in

\* Strictures on Zeal without Innovation.



Harvey Lane, altogether incidental, and in his view perhaps only transient, admitted of that notoriety which would have been given it by the usual assemblage on such occasions. Happily, his feelings were not oppressed by any public exhibition, while the religious part of the community were sufficiently aware that his credentials needed no human confirmation. Sanctified as it were from the womb, devoted to the ministry from his earliest youth, endued with all the wealth and grandeur of intellect, and holding habitual intercourse with heaven, he stood forth the acknowledged messenger of truth, under the highest sanction to be obtained on earth; all therefore that could be necessary was, the suffrage of the people over whom he was called to preside.

Studious chiefly to preserve the simplicity of the gospel, and the spirit of its institutions, he was no advocate for unnecessary forms; and though he very rarely assisted in any extra public service, he sometimes yielded to the wishes of his friends. In a few instances he was persuaded to take a part in ordination services, contrary to his prevailing inclination; but his own diffidence and modesty never permitted him to understand how *he* could impart any portion of authority to another, or concede a right which existed independently of his sanction; he therefore left the official parts of the service to other hands, while he contented himself with offering some seasonable advice, at the urgent request of those to whom it was addressed.

On being requested, at a later period, to attend the ordination of a minister at a distance, he excused himself by saying, "It has long been my opinion, that ordinations are best conducted by the presbyters or elders of the immediate vicinity of the party; and that, to step beyond that circle, is to sacrifice or impair the chief benefit of that practice, which is the putting a wholesome check on the abuse of popular suffrage, by making it impossible for a minister to establish himself at the head of a congregation, without the approbation and sanction of the circle of pastors with whom he is to act. It is an affair in which the church are chiefly or solely concerned; and though the calling in a stranger on such occasions may attract a greater audience, it is in my humble opinion at the expense of more important objects. For these and other reasons that might be adduced, you must allow me firmly, though most respectfully, to decline the service you have been pleased to assign me."

The modern practice so generally adopted, seems already to have induced a persuasion, that the attendance of ministers, and those chiefly from a distance, is necessary to give validity to an appointment to the pastoral office. Some instances have also been known, where the expense incurred in procuring the public ordination of a village pastor, has amounted to more than half his annual income, while the place of worship was loaded with a debt which the people had not the means

to discharge. It also happens now adays, not unfrequently, that when some stripling from the academy is to receive the honours of a public ordination, the ceremony is announced in large placards on the wall, by printed circulars, notices in the local newspapers, stating the price to be paid for tickets of admission to a splendid dinner, where toasts and speeches are to form part of the entertainment of the day. How far this is in unison with apostolic simplicity, or with the genuine spirit of christianity at any time, the plainest understanding can determine.

To the common practice of a formal opening of new places of worship he entertained a strong objection, as carrying with it a sort of implied ‘consecration;’ but in the latter part of life this objection was somewhat relaxed. Towards those of his own denomination he was generally unyielding; but when solicited by the Independents, the General Baptists, the Kilhamites and the Ranters among the Methodists, he more readily complied; and to give a triumph to christian liberality he preached at the opening of three new places in the town of Leicester itself, all of a different denomination from his own,—a proof of the high estimation in which he was held in his own neighbourhood, and of the value he put upon christian concord and communion. At the same time he so far preserved his consistency on the subject of opening new places of worship, that he generally went alone to preach on the first sabbath, instead

of setting apart any extra season for that purpose, and to places where his influence was needed and would be felt, in reviving or promoting the general interests of christianity.

He had a decided objection to the term ‘chapel’ being applied to places of worship among dissenters, seeing it had been previously appropriated to religious edifices connected with the established church. Dissenters, he thought, “need not borrow plumage from the hierarchy, for simplicity is true beauty.” Neither did he approve of dissenting ministers wearing a gown, since it had been appropriated as the costume of the university. The early nonconformists, he observed, continued to wear the gown after their ejection, but it was only as a sign of having taken their degrees. If dissenting ministers, said he, will robe themselves, let them adopt a costume characteristic of their own seminaries, and not appear as if they were members of the national establishment.



## SECTION XII.

A. D. 1807, 1808.

MR. HALL'S retirement at Enderby, where for several months he patiently resigned himself to the will of providence, led to two of the most important events of his whole life, and gave a new direction to all his future proceedings. A way was prepared, very unexpectedly, for his settlement with the congregation at Leicester, and the forming of a domestic connection which originated in circumstances equally singular and unpremeditated.

In the summer of 1807, a pious man in the neighbouring village of Lorton died, who had long been a member of the church at Arnsby, and Mr. Hall was requested to preach a funeral sermon at the dwellinghouse of the deceased. Being within seven miles of Clipstone, where Mr. Thomas Edmonds was then stationed, he went over to Lorton on the thursday evening to hear the sermon, and if possible to prevail with Mr. Hall to extend his visit, to preach at Clipstone and administer the Lord's supper on the following sabbath. He resisted the proposal with considerable pertinacity, alleging that he must of necessity return to

Enderby; that he had lately undertaken several short journies, was tired of travelling and of company, wanted retirement and rest, and begged he might not be farther urged upon the subject. After a great deal of altercation Mr. Edmonds took his leave at a late hour in the evening, and ventured to say he should assuredly send for him on saturday if the weather were fine; and if he did not come, the Clipstone congregation would be destitute, as he himself was engaged to preach at another place. By some strange fatuity Mr. Edmonds still persevered in his intention, while Mr. Hall as positively persisted in his refusal. When the horse and gig arrived at Enderby on the saturday, Mr. Hall was much displeased, and told the messenger he might return as he came, he should not go. The messenger, who knew Mr. Hall well, begged permission to stay awhile to refresh himself and the horse. In a little time the whole scene was changed. Mr. Hall became profuse in his attentions, invited the friend to dine with him, and entered into a friendly conversation on the state of the congregation at Clipstone. At length he was prevailed upon to mount the gig, and arrived at Clipstone at a late hour that evening, in perfect good humour with himself and all about him, without once adverting to the singular circumstances which had brought him there.

During this short and reluctant visit he was smitten with the charms of innocence and virtuous simplicity, in one who lived in the family where he

took up his abode. Having obtained satisfactory information respecting character and piety, he could not leave the village till he had fully avowed his attachment. An intimate friend from a distance having arrived at Enderby, and not finding him there, immediately hastened to spend the sabbath with him at Clipstone, rejoiced to find that he was once more entering upon the duties of the sacred office. Next day he communicated to him his feelings and intentions, and at the same time solicited an opinion, while he descanted on the amiable qualities which he had discovered in the object of his affections. No direct opinion was of course elicited on such a delicate subject, and the passive temper of his friend strengthened the determination which had been previously formed.

Impatient of any farther delay, he embraced the earliest opportunity of giving utterance to the sentiments of his heart, and in doing so he used no preliminaries, no circuitous or indirect mode of expression. A total stranger to the dialect of common admirers, he at once adopted the full and manly style of sincerity and truth. Without hesitation or restraint he avowed his attachment, and immediately made "an honourable offer of marriage." The surprise which this sudden burst of feeling created, may easily be imagined; but the emphatic declaration once made was not to be recalled.

The friends of Mr. Hall wished to see him form a matrimonial alliance, hoping it might add to his

tranquility, and fix him with the congregation who were now looking forward to engage his services. Some of his more intimate connections desired, perhaps very naturally, to direct his attention to some of higher rank and station, to ladies of superior education and literary attainments, of whom there were several in the circle of his acquaintance, not unworthy of his admiration. But though the talents and genius of such distinguished persons were the frequent theme of his encomium, his taste was too exquisite, his perceptions too refined, to allow him to be satisfied with intellectual endowments, or even with the highest degree of moral excellence itself, in the absence of those gentler graces and that softened elegance which constitute the peculiar beauty and loveliness of the female character. To his own delicate sensibility nothing was more repulsive than the appearance of any of the masculine virtues in the other sex, or the arrogance that would dispute or invade the right of presidency ; and though his candour and politeness would induce him to pass unnoticed the less amiable qualities in any of his acquaintance, he looked for something very different in the character of a wife ; for the docile and the useful, the graces which illumine and adorn the family circle, without disdaining any of its duties, contributing alike to personal tranquility and enjoyment, and to the wise and prudent economy of domestic life. Neither rank nor property nor talents had any charms for him, apart from what is refined and



amiable in morals and religion ; when therefore any one commended to his notice a learned or ingenious lady, he used impatiently to reply, “I do not want a wife to read greek, sir. I can read greek myself.”

In accordance with this sentiment an able writer in the *Westminster Review* has remarked, that “what is usually termed an accomplished woman of the present day is generally found to be unfit for any useful pursuit, and much more so for the cares and duties of domestic life, the performance of which is deemed incompatible with these accomplishments. To appear above all necessity of attending to domestic concerns is one of the vanities of the age, and is the distinctive mark of vulgar-minded opulence ; what is now deemed education creates ideas incompatible with the performance of duty, and associates a feeling of degradation with the idea of that performance. The mode of education now so prevalent, gives the notion that an accomplished woman must be taught to derive pleasure from reading ; and hence has sprung up a species of literature peculiarly dedicated to their service, a literature composed chiefly of appeals to a few emotions, common to the weak and uninstructed, tending to create a false kind of delicacy, and a taste for superficial elegance ; no mental effort, no power of thought is required, it is only necessary that the reader should be a human being. The mind, by its intimate converse with books of mere sentimentality, is led far away

from the attainment of any useful object, and induced to dwell on images of impossible enjoyments, or to attach worth to what is either unattainable or really pernicious. A man of true delicacy and of fine intelligence is far more shocked and repulsed by these modern pretensions to refinement, than by the homely artless ignorance of what is called an unaccomplished woman. The artificial delicacy of a modern educated woman and studied complaisance, is incomparably more disgusting than the honest feeling, however rudely it may be expressed, and the untutored good sense of the other."

Our excellent friend evidently acted on this feeling, and happily escaped a catastrophe which has been fatal to some others; and found, where he least expected it, a companion who became the solace of his remaining days. Immediately after the first interview, some necessary arrangements were made; the object of his affections received some educational advantages previous to the intended union, and remained under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Edmonds three months longer for that purpose. Mr. Hall had now reached the forty third year of his age, and had never been married, owing no doubt to the severe disappointment he had formerly met with, as he was ever the advocate of the conjugal state, and remarkable for the courtesy he uniformly paid to the sex. Encouraged by the prospect of improving health and of farther usefulness in the ministry, he resolved to venture within

the bands of matrimony, and to terminate, as he said, the eighteen years of anxiety and regret already endured.

Returning from one of his visits to Clipstone, where he had preached at a meeting of ministers, after this interesting acquaintance had commenced, he was stopped on his journey by a heavy fall of snow. Having arrived at the adjoining village of Sibbertoft, where lived a pious simple-hearted man, the occupier of a small publichouse, he was persuaded with some difficulty to tarry for the night. The good man was fully aware of the unexpected honour conferred upon him, and with all readiness provided for the prophet 'a stool, a candlestick, and a bed.' Mr. Hall at the same time was so delighted with the rustic simplicity of his host, and so persuaded of his fervent piety, that he felt greatly interested in his conversation. On the subject of experimental religion especially, he at all times listened with much satisfaction to the artless tale of illiterate and humble-minded christians. The village landlord gained so complete an ascendancy over his visitor, that at his request he preached the same evening on the unconsecrated spot, to as many of the neighbours as could be collected on so short a notice, making the taproom his cathedral, and the sign of the black swan the banner of his missionary station. During the time he was detained by the inclemency of the weather, the honest man furnished from his smoky shelf

a book or two on the subject of personal religion, which he offered Mr. Hall to read with his pipe ; and next day he returned to Enderby highly delighted with this singular adventure.

After remaining a short time at Clipstone, the intended bride was received into the family of Mr. Joseph Timms of Kettering, a kindness which Mr. Hall never afterwards forgot. Mrs. Timms, a pious and an accomplished lady, took an affectionate interest in her visitant, and assisted in the acquirement of those domestic habits which became the distinguished station she was soon to occupy.

Having passed about six months very advantageously, in this genteel and interesting family, arrangements were made for the approaching nuptials. The time was fixed, and as a necessary preliminary, Mr. Hall engaged to be at Kettering on the previous evening. It is true he did not absolutely forget the happy day, like an eccentric Scots physician who is said to have suffered this singular lapse of memory ; but as he did not arrive at the time appointed, no small degree of anxiety was excited. Passing on his way through Rowell, he there met with his fascinating friend Mr. Toller, whose conversation detained him all the evening, and absorbed the whole of his attention. Next morning he arrived at Kettering, very fortunately, within the canonical hour, and hastened directly to church, where he was married by the Rev. Mr. Bugg, March 25th 1808. Returning the same



afternoon to Enderby he remarked to a friend on the road, it was the happiest day of his life, and that marriage was the most honourable state of man. The union became to him a source of great satisfaction, and it is observable that after this there was no recurrence of mental disease, though paroxysms of bodily pain frequently returned with unabated violence.

In the character of a husband he was uniformly kind and gentle, easy to be entreated, yielding himself with ease and gracefulness to all the minor duties of domestic life. In few instances has the apostle's counsel been so happily illustrated: 'Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life.' Far from indulging in any feeling of superiority or of self-importance, Mr. Hall was most gratified by the complaisance shown to his amiable partner, and was willing at all times to sink his own claims to personal attention, that they might more freely be conceded to her. Instead of being eclipsed by his splendour, Mrs. Hall always appeared to most advantage in company where he was present. By an unobserved effort he had the peculiar felicity of investing her with a portion of his own dignity, supplying every defect, inspiring a becoming confidence, and commanding the respect of others by his own affectionate and courteous example. He neither thought nor felt

himself demeaned by the unequal alliance, all that was truly valuable in his esteem was moral worth. The loftiness of his mind towered far above the artificial or fortuitous distinctions of society; and the mantle of his love was amply sufficient to protect and adorn all who came in contact, or within the immediate sphere of his influence.

Mrs. Hall did not often appear in company, but commendably devoted her chief attention to domestic duties, to render home a scene of comfort and enjoyment; and on one occasion, when some kind enquiries were made respecting her, Mr. Hall apologised for her absence with his own characteristic ingenuity. "My wife sir is quite well, but she is a perfect Martha, careful and cumbered about many things. We are going to have a friend or two to dine with us, and at such times she is as much engaged as Napoleon would be in the arrangement of his army, previous to fighting a mighty battle."

His domestic character was altogether mild and amiable, a virtuous tenderness pervaded the whole of his deportment; and nowhere was he seen to so much advantage as in the bosom of his own family, where he reposed with unmingled serenity and satisfaction, diffusing joy and peace to all around. He was indeed the monarch of the household, but the diadem he wore was a diadem of love.

## SECTION XIII.

A. D. 1808, 1809.

THE infidelity which overspread a great part of Europe, soon after the French revolution, rolled its oblivious flood to the shores of India, and threatened the interests of revealed religion, which had but lately dawned upon that land of darkness. The sceptics that swarmed about the Presidency, very freely extended their toleration to the disgusting forms of heathen idolatry, and became even the apologists of its obscene and sanguinary rites, while they discovered the most implacable enmity against the principles of christianity, which a few peaceable and disinterested missionaries had attempted to propagate. Hypocritically pretending that the eastern territory would be endangered by their success, and the unrestricted circulation of the scriptures, they inspired the Bengal government with similar apprehensions, after the departure of the noble and enlightened marquis Wellesley, who had during his administration afforded to the different missions in the east, his liberal protection and support. It was now sought to impose a restriction upon the itinerant labours of

these good men, to limit their number, to inspect their various publications previously to their being circulated, that nothing might offend the sublime conceptions and feelings of the Hindoo brahman or the Mussulman priest, and in effect to place all the missionary transactions under the surveillance of the police. So much did infidelity contemplate and partially accomplish in India.

The British government at home, and the East India directors in Leadenhall street, were at the same time to be alarmed for the safety of their foreign possessions, "if christianity should be suffered to interfere with the prejudices and habits of the peaceable Hindoos." For this purpose a number of sceptical writers, feigning themselves christians for decency sake, but in close alliance with the infidels of the east, beset the India House and the Board of Controul with their incessant wailings, demanding the interposition of public authority, and the instant recal of all the missionaries. The Rev. John Owen, the indefatigable secretary of the Bible society, defended that noble institution from the insidious attempts of these unbelievers, in an eloquent appeal to the Chairman of the East India Company. Rev. Daniel Wilson, now bishop of Calcutta, at a Bible association, said in a noble attitude of defiance, "*he* would be answerable for all the mischief the Bible might do in India, or in any other part of the world." Then followed the Rev. Andrew Fuller with an ample "Apology for the Christian Missions to India,"



containing answers to all the belligerents, and which were published early in 1808.

Mr. Hall having formerly distinguished himself in this warfare, which had now taken a new direction, by his incomparable sermon on "Modern Infidelity," was strongly solicited to take a part in the present defence. This he had in some measure engaged to do; and during his seclusion at Enderby he occasionally employed himself upon the subject, but after having written a number of pages he threw them into the fire, deeming them unworthy of public notice. This lack of service was obligingly supplied by the late Rev. Adam Clarke, LL. D. who ably exposed the pretended "excellence of Hindoo morals," by a direct appeal to the Institutes of Menu and their sacred poorans. The adversaries were at length defeated, and the cause of truth finally prevailed.

The following is Mr. Hall's letter on this occasion, addressed to the author of these memoirs, from which it will be seen that he was still labouring under great depression of spirits, which unfitted him for what he had intended to accomplish.

*Leicester, July 28th 1808.*

Dear Sir,

As it is probable you are impatient to hear of the progress of my publication, I write these lines to put an end to your suspense, by informing you that I find myself under the necessity of re-

linquishing it. A part is written out for the press; but it by no means satisfies me, nor do I suppose it would answer the purpose intended by it.

Independently of this, my health is such that I cannot prosecute it. It is seldom, for weeks, that I can sit up an hour together. My pain is nearly incessant, and often very severe; nor is my mind much more at ease than my body, being filled with awful and disquieting apprehensions respecting a hereafter. But on this part of the subject, I must beg leave to draw a veil. On the whole I feel myself utterly unfit for literary exertions, and must content myself with the quiet exercise of my ministry.

I have written these few lines that you may know how the affair stands, and what reply to make to enquiring friends.

I am, dear sir, yours sincerely,

ROBERT HALL.

Amidst these infirmities there was no abatement of devotional feeling, or of the ardour of his public services; the stream of tenderness which flowed from the compression of his physical and mental faculties, directed its course to the ocean of all perfection and of bliss, from whence he derived continual support, and fresh supplies of spiritual strength, which enabled him to triumph over the sufferings and conflicts of nature. If the comparison may in any degree be permitted, it might be said of this eminent man, as of the

great apostle of the gentiles, 'there was given him a thorn in the flesh' which could never be extracted, 'lest he should be exalted above measure,' by the remarkable gifts bestowed upon him and the plaudits which necessarily followed; yet while the power of Christ so evidently rested upon him, he had reason rather to glory in his infirmities than dread their continuance. When scarcely able to stand in the pulpit, from excessive pain and weakness, his feelings carried him beyond the reach of every painful sensation, and the fire of devotion burned with such intensity that he was like the central heat amongst his people, who were continually receiving from his ministrations a renewed warmth and glow of holy feeling. The success of his labours, which was considerable, might with more propriety be imputed, in the order of means, to the eminence of his piety, than to the strength and force of his mental energies. The same talents employed, without an equal degree of spirituality, might have excited great admiration, but could not have produced those moral effects attendant upon his ministry; in him the orator was forgotten in the saint, and those who came to hear did not stop to admire, but went home silently to meditate and to mourn.

The influx of hearers was so considerable that it was impossible any longer to delay the projected enlargement of the meetinghouse. In February 1809 this measure was determined on, if the consent of the minister could be obtained. In order

to accomplish this the people collected between six and seven hundred pounds, the whole sum requisite for the purpose, before the work was undertaken, several respectable individuals of other denominations in the town having liberally contributed towards it, from a feeling of respect for Mr. Hall, and a conviction that such a measure was demanded by the general interests of religion. His objections were at length overcome, and the place of worship in Harvey Lane was in the course of the year enlarged to twice its former size: yet it was soon full and overflowing.

The church under Mr. Hall's pastoral care having been for many years connected with the Northamptonshire Association of baptist churches and ministers, he was requested to write the annual epistle for 1809, on the "Influence of the Holy Spirit" in the economy of redemption. His sentiments on this subject having formerly been considered as somewhat equivocal, it afforded no ordinary satisfaction that he now produced a most decisive and interesting testimony on that vital article of the christian faith; not so much however in the form of stating and defending the doctrine itself, the truth of which he takes for granted in his introductory remarks, as for the purpose of making a suitable and experimental improvement of what was already acknowledged and believed. The influence of the Holy Spirit is considered as the primary source of regeneration, not as the effect; and that while all subsequent donations are



given in answer to prayer, the first bestowment of this inestimable blessing is perfectly free and spontaneous, not depending on the will of man, but as the direct originating cause of all holy affections and desires. The gift of the Holy Spirit is also considered as the great and distinguishing promise of the christian dispensation, to be enjoyed in all its plenitude in the future ages of the church, the remarkable effusion on the day of pentecost being only the 'firstfruits' and earnest of what is still to come.

In this short treatise there are some of the most exquisite passages that ever proceeded from the author's pen, not indeed the most eloquent or splendid, but the most tender and touching, such as make a direct appeal to the best feelings of every real christian, and show how much the author himself had been indulged with sacred communications from above. In illustrating the manner in which believers are 'led by the Spirit,' is the following beautiful comparison. "As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is, a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit."

On the necessity of seeking and cherishing these sacred influences, he remarks, that as in worldly concerns it is of consequence to embrace oppor-

tunities and to improve critical seasons, so is it in the things of the Spirit. "There are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, when much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. These are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine and every falling shower; how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above, which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop."

This small piece on the subject of experimental religion was republished some years afterwards by the London Tract Society, which no doubt greatly extended its usefulness; and in one instance at least, it is said to have been the means of the conversion of an avowed sceptic.

The congregation in Harvey Lane being much revived, and the meetinghouse considerably enlarged, it was attempted in the present year to re-organise a more efficient Sunday school, which called forth the energies of the minister in its behalf; and on this occasion a sermon was delivered and afterwards printed, under the title of, "The advantages of Knowledge to the lower classes."

It was surely a phenomenon in the history of mind, that in a protestant and enlightened nation it should be deemed necessary, in the nineteenth century, to defend and to demonstrate so obvious a proposition, and that an apology should be demanded for attempting to give gratuitous instruction to the friendless poor, sufficient to enable them at least to read the oracles of God. If the church of Rome should be a friend to ignorance, it is not to be wondered at; "it is but paying the arrears of gratitude in which she is deeply indebted; and how is it possible for her not to hate that light which would unveil her impostures, and detect her enormities." But how ignorance should be fostered among protestant professors, who, maintaining that the bible alone is the charter of their religion, is not so easily accounted for. There was however a numerous class, not found among protestant dissenters certainly, nor among the middle orders of society generally, who have been the uniform advocates of mental and moral improvement, but among those who have commonly been found the most illiberal and the least informed of any portion of the community—the members of the aristocracy in church and state, who have "objected to the instruction of the lower classes from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and by impairing the habit of subordination, endanger the tranquility of the state."

"It is not easy to conceive however, in what

manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority and the obligation to obedience, should induce them to disobey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of rank which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will detect and expose. The objection we have stated, implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate government so insecure, as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudice and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano."

Happily, these enlightened sentiments have been gaining ground in society, since the time this sermon was delivered; and the objectors to a national education have either been reduced to silence, or their ravings are heard only at a distance. The preacher however does not rest on the advantages to be derived from the diffusion of general knowledge; he urges the necessity of inculcating that spiritual and saving knowledge which, "as a universal element, mingles with every action, and qualifies every disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct," he observes, "while it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has



consequences in a future world, so certain and infallible, that it is represented in scripture as a seed, no part of which is lost, for ‘whatsoever’ a man soweth, that shall he also reap. That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate holiness, is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments a painted sepulchre. Hence results the indispensable necessity, to every description of persons, of sound religious instruction, and of an intimate acquaintance with the scriptures as its genuine source.”

The counsel and advice addressed more immediately to the teachers and superintendants of the school are too interesting and impressive to be omitted; and if the spirit of these institutions is to be preserved, it must be by the frequent inculcation of similar views and principles. “We trust,” says the preacher, “it will be your care who have the conduct of the school we are recommending to the patronage of this audience, to impress on these children a deep conviction of their radical corruption, and of the necessity of the Spirit to render the knowledge they acquire, practical and experimental. Be not satisfied with making them read a lesson, or repeat a prayer. By every thing tender and solemn in religion, by a due admixture of the awful considerations drawn from the prospect of death and judgment, with others of a more

pleasing nature, aim to fix serious impressions on their hearts. Aim to produce a religious concern, carefully watch its progress, and endeavour to conduct it to a prosperous issue. Lead them to the footstool of the Saviour, teach them as guilty creatures to rely on his merits alone, and to commit their eternal interests entirely into his hands. Let the salvation of these children be the object to which every word of your instructions, every exertion of your authority is directed. Despise the profane clamour which would deter you from attempting to render them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy, not doubting for a moment that ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ and that the path to true happiness lies through purity, humility and devotion.”

“Meditate the worth of souls ; meditate deeply the lessons the scriptures afford on their inconceivable value and eternal duration. While the philosopher wearies himself with endless speculations on their physical properties and nature, while the politician only contemplates the social arrangements of mankind and the shifting forms of policy, fix *your* attention on the individual importance of man as the creature of God, and a candidate for immortality. Let it be your highest ambition to train up these children for an unchanging condition of being. Spare no pains to recover them to the image of God : render familiar to their minds, in all its extent, the various branches of that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord. Pray often with

them and for them, and remind them of the inconceivable advantages attached to that exercise. Accustom them to a punctual and reverential attendance at the house of God, insist on their sanctification of the sabbath, by such a disposal of time as is suitable to a day of rest and devotion. Survey them with a vigilant and tender eye, checking every appearance of an evil and depraved disposition the moment it springs up, and encourage the dawn of piety and virtue."

Towards the close of 1809, died the pious and amiable Mrs. Timms of Kettering, in whose family Mrs. Hall had resided a short time previous to her marriage; and now that the sympathies of friendship were demanded, Mr. Hall, who was never insensible to the afflictions of any of his acquaintances, addressed to the bereaved husband and family the following letter, chiefly distinguished for its affectionate and godly simplicity.

*Leicester, Dec. 26th 1809.*

My dear Friend,

It was with deep concern that Mrs. Hall and myself heard of the heavy affliction with which it has pleased providence to visit you, in the removal of our dear and highly esteemed friend, Mrs. Timms. Be assured we deeply sympathise with you in this affecting stroke. You, my dear friend, are so well acquainted with all the topics of christian consolation, that it is impossible for me to suggest any reflection to your mind which you will not have

already anticipated. You are perfectly aware that afflictions spring not from the dust, but are ordered by a wise and gracious Being, who alone knows what is best, both for the interest of those he is pleased to remove and for that of survivors.

There is much mercy mixed with the severity of this dispensation. You can entertain no doubt of her being well prepared for the awful change, nor did it take place till her family were placed in circumstances calculated to allay anxiety respecting their future settlement. I am happy to find that, all along foreboding the issue of her affliction, she yet evinced such an entire resignation to the divine will. Convinced as all must be, of the infinite benefit of the change to herself, it would be a degree of selfishness to indulge overmuch sorrow. Could you realize the felicity she now enjoys, you would think it cruel to wish her back. She now 'beholds the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off.'

You do not sorrow, my dear sir, as those who have no hope: 'you know whither she is gone, and the way you know.' Blessed be God for the hope of the gospel, and for the interposition of that glorious Redeemer, who has brought life and immortality to light! Your dear companion knew and loved and trusted in this Saviour, and is now enjoying the end of her faith, even the salvation of her soul. Could she look down upon you from her celestial abode, and were permitted to address you; would she not say, Weep not for me, my



felicity is beyond expression ; our separation is but for a short time, in a few months or years at most we shall meet, never more to part. Prepare to follow me, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.

While you mourn, as you cannot fail to do, the loss of so excellent a woman, you will not forget the debt of gratitude due to God for bestowing so great a blessing, and continuing the possession of it so long. All mortal unions are contracted upon the implied term of an inevitable dissolution. Thanks be to God, that if any thing spiritual attends a union on earth, that may subsist for ever.

My dear wife is deeply affected at the melancholy tidings. Little did she or I conceive that when you and your dear partner visited us, we should see her face no more. May God support your mind under this heavy stroke, and make it the instrument of encreasing your preparation for future blessedness, as well as of exciting every surviving branch of the family to a more earnest pursuit of eternal things, is the prayer of,

my dear sir,

your affectionate and sympathising friend,

ROBERT HALL.

PS. Mrs. Hall desires to be most affectionately and sympathetically remembered. In dear Mrs. Timms she has lost one of her best friends, I might say the very best. God bless you and comfort you. Adieu once more, my dear friend.

## SECTION XIV.

A. D. 1810.

THE commencement of this year was marked by a highly honourable and beneficial coalition between the Pastor of the baptist church in Harvey Lane, and the Vicar of St. Mary's, for the benevolent purpose of extending the circulation of the holy scriptures. The Rev. Thomas Robinson had known Mr. Hall from his youth, and soon after the latter had settled at Leicester an intimacy grew up between them. Mr. Robinson was a man of great excellence, a strict churchman, entertaining high notions of episcopal prerogatives, and not unmindful of the precedence claimed by those of his own order; yet while he preserved a chilling distance from the general body of nonconformists, and carefully avoided all contamination with the principles of dissent, he honoured with his friendship a few eminent individuals among them, and invited them to his house whenever they happened to visit Leicester.

The great usefulness attending the ministry of this pious clergyman, and the general esteem entertained for his character, gave him a commanding

influence over all classes of society, which he employed for the sole purpose of promoting their present and future welfare. Amongst other plans of usefulness he, in the beginning of 1810, projected the formation of a branch Bible-society, and solicited the assistance of Mr. Hall, which was cheerfully and promptly rendered. He saw in the structure of the parent society "a rallying point for the piety of the age, an unsuspecting medium of communication between the good of all parties and nations, a centre of union and cooperation in the advancement of a common cause, which cannot fail to allay the heats and smooth the asperities of discordant sentiment;" an object ever near his heart, and which it was the labour of his life to accomplish. At the urgent request of his clerical friend he drew up the introductory Address, deeply imbued with the candid and benevolent spirit of its author, announcing the formation of an Auxiliary Society at Leicester.

Mr. Robinson felt gratified in having secured so powerful an ally, and manifested towards his dissenting brother the utmost cordiality. Walking together to the public meeting, on the day appointed for instituting the new society, he took Mr. Hall by the arm; when the latter immediately observed, "On such an occasion sir, this is the way that things *ought* to be." The other quickly replied, "Yes, my brother, and this is the way that things *shall* be." In this manner they entered the town hall, locked in each others arms, and were

greeted with the acclamations of the whole assembly. Notwithstanding the almost insuperable aversion Mr. Hall had to public meetings, especially to his appearance on a platform, the pious vicar retained such an ascendancy over him, that his eloquence was afterwards frequently employed at these anniversaries, in advocating the claims of the bible society, and they went on hand in hand together in promoting the important interests it embraced.

The harmony which subsisted between these eminent individuals, each the leader of a host, was never interrupted, though occasion might sometimes be furnished for the exercise of mutual candour and forbearance. The charms of Mr. Hall's ministry were not to be resisted; the meetinghouse would inevitably make encroachments on the church, and several of Mr. Robinson's hearers were from time to time received into the baptist communion. The worthy vicar, sufficiently aware of the captivating eloquence of his friend, never suffered this circumstance to create any jealousies between them. After numerous secessions, St. Mary's church was still replenished with fresh hearers; the labours of Mr. Robinson were eminently successful, and he might be considered, as Mr. Hall said of another clergyman in a similar case, "the great hammer" of the town of Leicester. But when numbers had been baptised, Mr. Robinson very pleasantly remarked in conversation, "I cannot think how it is, brother Hall, that



so many of my sheep have wandered into your fold." "Oh sir," replied the other, "they wanted washing, to be sure, that is all." The vicar of course enjoyed the repartee, and their mutual cordiality and esteem, continued undiminished to the end of life, after an acquaintance of more than thirty years.

Mr. Robinson was not insensible to the numerous excellencies of his nonconforming brother, nor was he wanting in sympathy amidst his severe and frequent affliction. On one occasion, while Mr. Hall was labouring under a paroxysm of his disorder, he received a visit from one whose praise is in all the churches, the Rev. Isaac Mann, the late faithful and indefatigable pastor of the baptist church in Mazepond, London, a man who combined in his character an undeviating attachment to religious principle, with a candour and a liberality of feeling that endeared him to all denominations. During this short interview, it so happened that Mr. Robinson called in to see Mr. Hall, who in an agony of pain was sitting with his head resting on his arms upon the table. The two visitors affectionately sympathised with their afflicted friend, who then believed his disorder to be preternatural, the effect of some spiritual agency; and was the more persuaded of this, because none of his medical advisers could ascertain the cause. Their attempts to controvert his opinions on the subject of demonology, called forth a train of metaphysical reasoning on the connection between matter and

spirit, the seen and unseen world, which delighted and astonished them. Mr. Hall having left the room for a very few minutes, Mr. Robinson turned to Mr. Mann and said, "Oh who can tell what mercy there may be in this affliction? Who can tell what temptations and dangers it may have averted, and what might have resulted from such prodigious intellects, had they not been sanctified and chastened by so severe a visitation. He might have been exalted above measure, but is now humbled and abased at the Redeemer's feet."

In the course of the summer Mr. Hall was pressed to go to London, to deliver an address at the formation of an Academy at Stepney, for training up pious young men for the ministry, an object in which he cordially concurred. The only institutions of the kind, belonging to the baptist denomination, being nearly at the extremities of the kingdom, it was agreed on all hands that a more central situation was highly desirable; and to give it his countenance and support, he also delivered the anniversary address at the return of the season.

While in London on this important occasion, Mr. Hall suddenly determined to call on his friends at Cambridge, in his way back to Leicester. He had often wished to pay his promised visit, since he resigned his charge four years before, but could not summon sufficient resolution for the purpose. The congregation had also continued in a very unsettled state since the time he left; and after

having been accustomed to his superior style of preaching, and lived on 'angels food' for about fourteen years, they knew not how to be content with any other preacher. Aware of the partiality of the people, who had given the most substantial proofs of their attachment, and fearful of encreasing the difficulties of his successor, he had from motives of delicacy deferred his intended visit. But hearing that his friends at Cambridge were happily united in their present excellent but afflicted pastor, he suddenly made his appearance among them. The news of his unexpected arrival instantly spread in all directions, and the dawn of the sabbath excited universal joy and satisfaction. He staid only three or four days, which were wholly occupied in receiving the congratulations of his friends, who were delighted to see him once more in the midst of them. On taking leave he offered up a most affecting prayer, and promised a more lengthened visit when his engagements would permit.

Before the end of the year Mr. Hall engaged in a public ordination, a service which he very rarely performed; for though not disposed to complain of others, who felt less difficulty in coming forward on such occasions, he entertained great reluctance in taking upon himself this kind of responsibility. Whenever he entered on such an engagement it was in a manner rather peculiar to himself, appearing not as one having authority,

but performing an act of friendship or brotherly love; and carefully avoiding all appearance of ostentation, he generally confined these services to the immediate sphere of his own acquaintance. His feelings on this subject are pretty well known, and are strongly expressed in one of his printed letters. "Ordination services, as they are now conducted, I consider as of more show than use. The presence of one or two ministers, along with the church, accompanied with prayer and laying on of hands, and a few serious exhortations, would be a genuine scriptural ordination. Nothing can be more distant from this, than the manner in which these things are at present conducted."

Conformably with these views, and omitting the extraneous formalities, he complied with the solicitations of his highly respected friend Mr. Robertson, and preached at his settlement over the Independent congregation at Stretton. He engaged the more freely in this service, as it afforded an opportunity of expressing, what to him was at all times highly gratifying, his brotherly affection for those not immediately within the pale of his own communion. In the printed sermon he mentions the circumstance of his having been invited to take a part in this service among his pædobaptist brethren, as "a specimen of liberality" which afforded him great pleasure; adding in his preface, "how much it is to be lamented, that the christian world should be so violently agitated by disputes and divided into factions, on points which it is



allowed, in whatever way they are decided, do not enter into the essentials of christianity. When will the time arrive that the disciples of Christ shall cordially join hand and heart with all who 'hold the head,' and no other terms of communion be insisted upon in any church but what are necessary to constitute a real christian. The departure from a principle so directly resulting from the genius of christianity, and so evidently inculcated and implied in the sacred scriptures, has to my apprehension been productive of infinite mischief; nor is there room to anticipate the period of the universal diffusion of the christian religion, but in consequence of its being completely renounced and abandoned."

There is also something in the style of this address which distinguishes it from the generality of such compositions, and shows the unaffected modesty and diffidence of the author. It is not entitled a 'Charge,' the authoritative appellation commonly assumed on such occasions, but simply a "Discourse delivered to the Rev. James Robertson on his ordination;" and throughout the whole is displayed an amiable spirit of equality and brotherly affection. The difficulties attending the christian ministry, together with its encouragements, are developed in a manner tending to inspire zeal, and a humble though confident reliance on divine aid, in all who undertake the sacred office with a view to real and extensive usefulness. One passage especially, on the searching and discriminating nature of a useful ministry, carries with it such an air of

solemnity, and is so much in the preacher's own manner in his pulpit addresses, that it cannot be too oft repeated or recollected.

“Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour above all things to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny ; and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will ‘mourn apart.’ It is thus the christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.”

In the early part of Mr. Hall's ministry his discourses appeared chiefly in the form of a thesis, to which the text was little more than a motto ; but whatever advantage might attend the concentrated force of such a mode of address, it is more than counterbalanced by other considerations. Besides its unsuitableness to the general taste and capacity

of a religious and often unlettered audience, it scarcely admits of any thing like a close or critical examination of the scriptures, or even of their competent elucidation ; however well therefore it might suit the senate or the bar, it is but ill adapted to the specific purposes of the christian ministry. During one of these “splendid conflagrations” at Bedford, soon after Mr. Hall had commenced his stated labours at Cambridge, the sceptical author of the *Reign of George iii.* was induced to become one of his auditors. At the close of the service Mr. Belsham acknowledged to a friend that, disbelieving as he did, what he called the preacher’s dogmata, he had never heard such a discourse from the lips of any man before, and even ventured to suppose that Demosthenes himself could scarcely have surpassed such unrivaled eloquence.

At a later period of life Mr. Hall declined the topical mode of discussion, except in some rare instances, and adopted the more familiar style of a textual or doctrinal division, for the sake of general edification, but carefully preserved, what is essential to all equitable composition, a perfect unity of design, and a close cohesion in the different parts of his discourse. He at all times avoided a premature exposure of his plan, and rather hinted at than fully announced the simple distribution of its parts, and the object he had in view. His own practice was in this respect an admirable illustration of the advice submitted to his friend, not to abate the edge of curiosity by enabling the hearer

to anticipate what is intended to be advanced, nor to suffer the argument to force itself on the attention as an object apart, as if the sentiments were introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments.

Few preachers have been more solicitous for the conversion of their hearers than Mr. Hall, or more anxiously concerned to 'persuade men' to repent and believe the gospel; yet he was not accustomed to dwell on 'the terrors of the Lord,' or frequently to appeal to the divine denunciations. He generally employed the tenderest entreaties, the most convincing arguments, and addressed his expostulations with almost irresistible energy to the conscience and the heart. But when he unveiled the awful realities of eternity, and portrayed the terrors of the last day, there was something in the spirit and manner, added to the vividness of his conceptions, that distinguished him from all other preachers the writer of this article ever heard on the same subject. Instead of ascending the judgment seat and making free with its awards, no one of the auditors appeared so deeply awed and affected as himself, no one seemed to feel in an equal degree his need of mercy in prospect of that day, though all were penetrated and subdued; his tongue faltered, the words trembled on his lips, not a warning was uttered that did not find an echo in his own breast, nor a dread of self-deception felt, in which he did not fully participate. Never was there a preacher whose mind and spirit



was more deeply imbued with the subject of his address, or more congenial with the great design of the christian ministry; there was no languor, no weariness, no indifference; it was one continued stream of vitality, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

His own remarks on the manner in which the most tremendous of all subjects require to be treated, contain a true description of the inimitable manner in which he himself approached it. "In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, he says, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled 'the burden of the Lord,' ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realise its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it."

There were indeed several instances, especially after Mr. Hall's recovery from his second illness, in which the auditory appeared completely overwhelmed by the majesty of his address, and the uncommon stretch of thought, which seemed to

penetrate into the recesses of an eternal world. At the close of a sermon delivered at Clipstone, the people were unable to read a hymn, or to unite as usual in a song of praise ; and the preacher found it necessary to relieve the overpowering solemnity, by offering prayer at the conclusion of the service. Similar impressions were often made during his ministry at Leicester. Subsequently, at Bristol, when discoursing on Christ's second appearance, from 1 John iii. 2, we are told the effect was almost indescribable. The sublimity of his conceptions on the transforming influence of the second advent, like the rising sun gilding the tops of the mountains and imparting to them a portion of its own brightness, was wrought up to such a pitch as to produce a sort of religious crisis in the congregation. A clergyman, it is said, who had not heard Mr. Hall before, observed afterwards, that he never heard any thing like it ; and that he could hardly tell whether he was in the body or out of it. Several of the deacons and other of the hearers made similar remarks, and some were actually taken ill from the extraordinary excitement. One gentleman in particular secluded himself for a day or more, under the force of the impression, and others were similarly affected. Yet when Mr. Hall was afterwards reminded of this extraordinary sermon, he said that he knew of nothing remarkable in it, and should not have been surprised if he had been told it was one of an inferior description.

An anonymous writer has truly said, “there was nothing very remarkable in Mr. Hall’s *manner* of delivering his sermons. His simplicity, yet solemnity of deportment, engaged the attention, without promising any of his most rapturous effusions. His voice is feeble, but distinct; and as he proceeds it trembles beneath his images, and conveys the idea that the spring of sublimity and beauty in his mind are exhaustless, and would pour forth a more copious stream, if he had a wider channel than can be supplied by the bodily organs. The plainest and least inspired of his discourses are not without delicate gleams of expression. He expatiates on the prophecies with a kindred spirit, and affords awful glimpses into the valley of vision. He often seems to conduct his hearers to the top of the ‘delectable mountains,’ whence they can see from afar the glorious gates of the eternal city. He seems at home among the marvellous revelations of St. John; and while he expatiates on them, leads his hearers breathless through every varying scene of mystery, far more glorious and surpassing than the wildest of ancient fables. He stops, when they most desire that he should proceed,—when he has just disclosed the dawnings of the inmost glory to their enraptured minds; and leaves them full of imaginations of things ‘not seen,’ of joys too ravishing for smiles, and of impulses which wing their hearts along the line of limitless destiny.”

About this time a very serious but unexpected attack was preparing to be made on the rights and liberties of dissenters, by the interference of the government. The dissenters generally, and the methodists, had long been in the habit of itinerating in the villages, and of diffusing religious knowledge among the neglected and illiterate population, by the distribution of testaments and tracts, and the support of sabbath schools. The high-church party, alarmed at the peaceful and growing success of their labours, infused into a leading member of the government their own fears and apprehensions, and induced him to bring into parliament a bill to disqualify uneducated preachers, and otherwise to abridge the exercise of religious liberty. The attempt was however completely frustrated by the unanimous and prompt exertions of the whole dissenting body, who at the same time secured to themselves an enlargement of their rights and privileges.

During this crisis some sceptical writers, under the guise of socinianism, joined in the clamour against itinerant preaching, as injurious to the interests of 'rational christianity,' and the well-being of civil society. One of them, especially, affected to pour the utmost contempt on what he denominated the 'evangelical' system, as ineffectually absurd and fanatical, and seemed to intimate that its abettors were scarcely entitled to toleration, and that the government would do well



to limit the labours of a set of men so annoying to the established clergy.

Mr. Hall had been repeatedly urged to publish a defence of Village preaching, and had two or three years before this time written a few thoughts on this and on other kindred subjects, which had been announced by a public advertisement. The triumph eventually obtained over religious intolerance by the defeat of lord Sidmouth's bill, rendered the contemplated defence no longer necessary, and Mr. Hall destroyed the greater part of what he had previously written. The Fragments that were saved have already appeared in the third volume of his works.

Before the triumph had been fully achieved however, a friend of Mr. Hall's replied to one of these antagonists, who had published several pieces on the inexpediency of permitting indiscriminate preaching in the villages by uneducated men, and even some highly respectable ministers contemplated the possibility of their being silenced by some new act of the legislature. In the defence alluded to, the author prevailed on Mr. Hall to add a few paragraphs on a most important part of the controversy, affecting the truth and consistency of the evangelical doctrine, which it had been attempted to ridicule and despise. These remarks are of so permanent and interesting a nature, so independent of all political discussion, that they ought not to be consigned to oblivion with an

anonymous pamphlet, long since published and forgotten. They are therefore preserved in the following extract, which displays the usual acumen of the venerated author, and cannot fail to be highly gratifying to the reader.

MR. HALL

ON THE MYSTERIES OF REVELATION.

A Mystery may be defined, A DECLARATION UPON DIVINE AUTHORITY OF A MATTER OF FACT, THE MODE OF WHICH WE ARE UNABLE TO COMPREHEND. NOW you allow that there are, in the first principles of Natural Religion, truths of unquestionable certainty which yet are mysterious. You acknowledge the being of a God to be a truth of this sort, namely, that the *truth* of his existence cannot be called in question, yet that of the *mode* of his existence we know nothing. Why may not this be the case with respect to certain facts attested in the word of God? Why may not their *truth* be evident from divine testimony, though the *mode* of their existence remain a profound secret? You have yourself effectually refuted your superficial declamation on this subject, by admitting, with respect to Natural Religion, what you deny with respect to Revealed. If in the former there may be mysteries, but not in the latter, it can only be because the testimony of God is not a sufficient inducement

to believe a fact, the *manner* of whose existence we do not comprehend. This may be your case; but will you venture to rest your disbelief of mysteries in revelation on this principle? While you acknowledge that human testimony is sufficient to justify a belief of numerous facts, the *mode* of which we do not comprehend, will you deny it to the divine? Is the supreme Being the only one who is never to be credited upon his bare testimony?

The only plausible colour you have been able to give to your quibbles upon this subject, arises from a supposed contradiction between the terms *mysterious* and *revealed*; as if to speak of a mystery in revelation were the same thing as to affirm a fact to be revealed and not revealed. "To talk," say you, "as these people perpetually do, of the mysteries of revelation, is a perfect solecism. A mystery revealed is a mystery no longer. It would not be more absurd to talk of a concealed discovery."

Did we affirm that the facts which, we contend, are mysterious in revelation, were mysterious in the *very same respects* in which they are revealed, we should indeed be guilty of a "solecism." But what absurdity is there in saying, that they are revealed and mysterious in *different respects*; namely, that they are revealed with respect to their *truth*, though mysterious with respect to their *mode*; and that, consequently, we believe the former, though we know nothing about, nor pretend to

believe any thing respecting, the latter. It is very possible that an intellect so extremely shallow as yours, may not be able to comprehend this distinction; for I suspect that, with all your disdain of mysteries, there are more things mysterious to you, than to almost any other writer who ever presumed to instruct the public.

“To tell us too, of mysteries revealed that transcend finite reason is,” you inform us, “to abuse the ear and the understanding with a jargon of words. The proposition is unintelligible, it is utter nonsense.”

Now all this insolent dogmatism turns entirely upon confounding two things totally distinct, the *truth* of the facts attested, with the *mode* of their existence. The former is revealed, the latter mysterious; the former is as certain and as evident as the testimony on which it rests, the latter from the very nature of the subject is buried in impenetrable obscurity.

“When it is added, that they are to be received upon the authority of the revealer, without enquiring into the mode of them; what is to be understood by this? The mode of them! The mode of what? The mode of the mysteries? What stuff is this!”

You do not know, it appears, that the doctrines of religion, whether true or false, whether plain or mysterious, are statements of matters of fact, or declarations of future facts: and who shall say that there is any thing absurd in speaking of the



*mode* of these facts? If the term *mode* be attached to mysteries, it is but an abridged form of expression for what in strictness of speech belongs to the fact which the proposition in question affirms.

With respect to the instance that you adduce, of a boy witnessing the ascent of a balloon without knowing the cause, which is afterwards satisfactorily explained to him, I ask, Did the boy act reasonably in believing the fact, before the cause of it was explained; having the evidence of his senses for the fact, although he was utterly at a loss to account for it? And why may not I, and those with whom I agree in sentiment, act a reasonable part in believing a matter of fact—the incarnation of Christ for example—on the testimony of the word of God? The boy receives a subsequent explanation, and then you tell us, what was before a mystery becomes revealed: it is a mystery no longer. But the boy believed the fact before the cause of it was explained, that is, he believed it while it was a mystery; and I presume his conduct in so doing, did not become reasonable in consequence of the subsequent explanation.

To allege that the phenomenon was afterwards explained, and so ceased to be mysterious, is futile, and quite foreign to the question; which is really, whether it be reasonable upon the ground of divine testimony to believe a fact, the truth of which is asserted in that testimony, while the mode of it is not attempted to be explained. There is scarcely a phenomenon in nature but may be styled a

mystery in one view, though most perspicuous in another. The existence of the phenomenon is fully ascertained, and the analogy it bears to other appearances of nature clearly discovered. Presenting no difficulties but what are common to other parts of nature, we say that it is solved, though if we reflect, we must be conscious that there are circumstances attending it which are utterly incapable of explanation. Our ideas are clear, our knowledge extends to a certain point, beyond which our views are lost in obscurity. The very laws of contact between us and the material world are extremely mysterious, and the attempt to ascertain them, or to solve the question how it is that we perceive any thing, has given rise to more metaphysical theories than you have probably ever heard of, more certainly than you will ever be able to comprehend. Since then so much that is truly mysterious has taken place in Nature, what stupid presumption is it to affirm that nothing of that kind can exist in Revelation, which is the production of the same Being, and more immediately concerns his perfections and his ways.

Our Lord, in his discourse with Nicodemus, speaks in a manner which implies that the things of religion must be expected, far more than those of nature, to transcend the comprehension of mankind. 'If I have told you earthly things, said he, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?' He then proceeds to give a specimen of those 'heavenly things,' by

telling him that the Son of man ‘came down from heaven,’ and yet was ‘in heaven;’ and that ‘as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ In inferring from the superior sublimity of heavenly things that they must at least be as mysterious as the phenomena of nature, it seems that we reason right, because we reason as our Saviour did. Whether there be any mysteries in revelation, or in other words, any declarations of facts, the mode of which we cannot comprehend, must after all be determined entirely by an appeal to the sacred volume; but I have, I trust, urged enough to show the absurdity of concluding that there can be none, and to detect your shallow sophistry. If you have imposed upon yourself, you are to be pitied for your weakness; but if, as I suspect, you meant only to lay a trap for your readers, you are to be detested for your dishonesty.

- Though I am far from resting the proof of there being some things mysterious in christianity, on the term *mystery*, yet I must not neglect to observe, that there is scarcely any term more frequently employed to designate the christian doctrine; and that, in some instances at least, it is manifestly designed to denote that which *remains* a mystery after it is declared. When St. Paul had been speaking of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and his church, he adds, ‘This is

a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.'

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The general aversion which Mr. Hall entertained for periodical literature, and especially for periodical critique, is generally understood; nor could he be prevailed upon to assist in such an undertaking, except from some peculiar circumstances, in which the interests of religious and moral truth might seem to demand it, or to gratify the feelings of a pure and elevated friendship. He spent much of his time in exploring the Greek fathers, and thought but little of modern critics in comparison of them. Occasion was given however for calling into exercise a portion of his critical acumen, which afforded no ordinary treat to the lovers of elegant literature, and added not a little to the brilliance of his other performances.

The Eclectic Review had recently been established for the ostensible purpose of counteracting the prevailing scepticism and licentiousness of the day, and to procure for all orthodox writers, what they had not heretofore obtained from any of the public journals, a just and candid notice of their publications in favour of the doctrines of divine revelation. After the appearance of the first series, the editorship of this work was consigned to Mr. Dan Parken, a young man of considerable attainments, with whose family Mr. Hall had long been acquainted. He was also so much pleased with



the talent displayed in the management of the work, that he was prepared to yield to the solicitation of his amiable friend, who presently availed himself of the fairest opportunities for gaining a little of his assistance.

Mr. John Foster, author of the celebrated Essays bearing his name, was the early friend of Mr. Hall. The editor of the *Eclectic*, with consummate prudence, immediately endeavoured to lay under tribute this mutual alliance, by inducing Mr. Hall to write a critique on some second or third edition of the essays, which had already found a rapid sale. Mr. Foster, with his redundant stores of original genius, was little known to the literary or religious world, previously to the appearance of his essays, which suddenly burst upon the public with a meridian effulgence, without any of the usual presages of morning light or evening shade.

Mr. Hall's review, which forms the first article he wrote for the *Eclectic*, in January 1809, added not a little to the celebrity of his friend's performance. On receipt of the manuscript Mr. Parken was so delighted with the success of his application, that he could not forbear expressing himself, in a letter to his friend Dr. Styles, in the following romantic and agitated manner. "I inform you by these presents, that one of the articles in our new number is written by Robert Hall; and I command you to discover, of your own sagacity, which article it is! You cannot imagine how foolishly joyous I was, at receiving the precious manuscript. An

intermittent laugh came on me, which lasted five or ten minutes; and then I set to work and wrote the author an egregious letter, stating how glad I was, and how I thanked him, and how good a review it was, and how I hoped it would not be the last." The writer's enthusiastic admiration of Mr. Hall, the deep interest he felt in the work of which he had lately become the editor, and the triumph he had in this instance achieved, very naturally account for the exultation in which he indulged; especially as he had now engaged, as he hoped, for a correspondent and contributor, one whom he afterwards described as "the most extraordinary of men, on whom the loftiest scholars have been proud to lavish their praise, and to whom the audience of Cicero or Bossuet might have listened with astonishment and rapture; a man, whose pure and redundant eloquence, the sublimest emanation of mind, resembles in its attributes the noblest element of nature, rivalling in grandeur, in beauty, and in energy, the light which fills the firmament, the tints that adorn the dew, and the rapid and irresistible flash that pierces and melts while it illuminates."

Mr. Hall, proceeding with his critique on the celebrated essays of his friend, introduces the author in the following just and appropriate manner. "Mr. Foster's name is probably new to most of our readers; but if we may judge from the production before us, he cannot long be concealed

from the notice and applause of the literary world. In an age of mediocrity, when the writing of books has become almost a mechanical art, and a familiar acquaintance with the best models has diffused taste, and diminished genius, it is impossible to peruse an author who displays so great original powers without a degree of surprise. We are ready to enquire by what peculiar felicity he was enabled to desert the trammels of custom, to break the spell by which others feel themselves bound, and to maintain a career so perfectly uncontrolled and independent. A cast of thought original and sublime, an unlimited command of imagery, a style varied, vigorous and bold, are some of the distinguishing features of these very singular essays. We add with peculiar satisfaction, that they breathe the spirit of piety and benevolence, and bear the most evident indications of a heart deeply attached to scriptural truth."

In noticing the Title of this masterly performance, calling it "Essays in a series of Letters to a Friend," the reviewer seems to have considered it as inappropriate, and apprises the reader that he must not look for any thing in the epistolary style, for that these "letters" resembled regular dissertations, rather than familiar epistles. Probably Mr. Hall was not at that time acquainted with the singular fact, that these profound dissertations were originally addressed to an endeared and intimate female friend, to whose inspection and approbation the author was anxious to submit such a train of

philosophical reasoning as could not have been duly appreciated by an ordinary mind; and it is well known that in this the writer gave full proof of his discernment. Had there unfortunately been a breach of contract, as in some other flagrant instances, the attorney general would have been strangely puzzled in making out a charge from these extraordinary letters, to convict the writer of a breach of matrimonial engagements.

The reviewer has selected from the essays a passage so forcible and original, so recondite and convincing, that no apology can be necessary for its reinsertion on a subject of such infinite importance. It is an argument derived from the ubiquity of the divine nature, which exposes the intolerable arrogance and presumption of Atheism, in pretending to an extraordinary degree of heroism in rejecting the general belief of the existence of a deity. "But it is heroism no longer," says the essayist, "if the atheist *knows* that there is no God. The wonder then turns on the great process by which a man could grow to the immense intelligence that can know that there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for *this* attainment! This intelligence involves the very attributes of divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in every place in the universe, he cannot know but there may be in some place manifestations of a deity by which even *he* would be overpowered. If he does not know absolutely every



agent in the universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in the universe, and does not know what is so, that which is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, the one which he wants may be, that there is a God. If he cannot with certainty assign the cause of all that exists, that cause may be God. If he does not know every thing that has been done in the immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus unless he knows all things, that is, precludes another deity by being one himself, he cannot know that the being whose existence he rejects does not exist. But he must *know* that he does not exist, else he deserves equal contempt and compassion for the temerity with which he firmly avows his rejection, and acts accordingly."

Mr. Hall afterwards wrote several other articles in the Eclectic which cannot here be noticed, but eventually declined the office of a reviewer, from the inconvenient demand it made upon his time, and a feeling of disgust at the unprincipled and obtrusive manner in which this department is generally conducted.

## SECTION XV.

A. D. 1811—1814.

AMONG the friends and admirers of Mr. Hall it was often a matter of regret that his labours were so much confined to one particular spot; that he could seldom be induced to preach from home, and that so many persons at a distance could not have the pleasure of hearing him. Having preached a sermon in London, in the summer of 1811, at the anniversary of the academical institution at Stepney, the substance of which had previously been delivered at Mr. Robertson's ordination; some of his influential friends projected a plan, to induce him to pay an annual visit to the city in the spring of the year, for the space of a month or six weeks, and in the course of that time to deliver two evening lectures every week, alternately in two different places provided for that purpose. It was hoped that this would be the means of promoting the interests of religion, especially among the higher classes, and persons of literary taste; and though it was well known that pecuniary considerations would have no weight whatever with Mr. Hall, it was readily perceived that three or

four hundred pounds would most cheerfully be subscribed for these annual lectures, as often as they were delivered, if the preacher could be prevailed upon to enter into such an engagement.

Mr. Hall knew how to appreciate this token of respect; and though his diffidence did not allow him to comply, he avoided putting a direct negative on the first application. He alleged that such an undertaking, however prudently conducted, would expose him, in the opinion of some, to the charge of vanity and self-confidence, if not of pride and presumption, while he felt assured that his deficiencies would disappoint the expectations of his too partial friends. He also stated that, after much prayerful consideration of the subject, he felt compelled to relinquish the proposal which had been made, in consequence of an encreasingly bad state of health, which rendered it impossible for him to fulfil the wishes of his friends. Thus, after long and painful suspense, this negotiation terminated. Providence, Mr. Hall observed, seemed to have decided the affair, in having placed him in such painful and insuperable circumstances; and in that decision he entirely acquiesced.

During the greater part of this and the following year he suffered much from internal disorder, and often feared that his constitution was breaking up; that unless his malady soon took a favourable turn, it would speedily have a fatal termination. He was at the same time

deeply conscious of his own unworthiness, and considered his afflictions light in comparison of his deserts. In a letter to a friend he says, "I hope I am more anxious to see my heavy affliction sanctified than removed. Whether it would be best for it to be removed, may well be doubted: of the admirable benefit arising from sanctification, both in time and eternity, there can be no doubt. I presume the Lord sees that I require more hammering and hewing than almost any other stone that was ever elected for a spiritual building, and that is the secret reason of his dealings with me. Let me be broken into a thousand pieces, if I may but be made up again, and formed by his hand for purposes of his mercy. I see more and more of the unspeakable blessedness of being made like God, and of becoming a partaker of his holiness. I see it I say, but I do not attain, or at most in so unspeakably small a degree, that I have every moment reason to be abased and repent in dust and ashes."

In the autumn of 1811 his health was so far improved, that he was enabled to pay a second visit to Cambridge, where his presence excited a very lively interest, and all classes flocked to hear him; some from London and other distant places, and several distinguished members of the university. The place of worship was so full and overflowing, that it was sometimes necessary to go an hour before the commencement of the service in order to secure a seat. Crucified to the world



and the world to him, by the cross of Christ, he did not go to be caressed, nor to gratify public curiosity, but to enjoy the sacred satisfaction of holding communion with his brethren ; to indulge in all those hallowed feelings which religious friendship inspires, and to testify the gospel of the grace of God. The sentiments and spirit of a primitive pastor pervaded all these interviews, and to give them fuller expansion, the poorer members of the church were invited to a public breakfast by an opulent friend, that they also might share in his affectionate regards. During this intercourse the pious pastor entered with much feeling into their individual history, the trials and vicissitudes which had attended them, recapitulating with great affability and condescension the principal incidents of their former experience, and mingling with the recital the most seasonable advice. For his pastoral fidelity he was everywhere as much beloved by the poorer class, as he was by the more opulent members of the church. With a truly apostolic spirit he confirmed the souls of the disciples, and strengthened the hands of all his brethren.

At home also his labours in the Lord were crowned with encreasing success ; and in the course of this year, when writing to a friend, he says with devout gratitude, “ My ministry continues through mercy to be considerably blessed in awakening sinners. I cannot but hope the church and congregation are in a very promising

state. We are in perfect harmony, and we have frequent additions.”

Early in 1812 one of those rare and singular occurrences took place, which mark the mysterious movements of providence, and furnished occasion for the exercise of his discernment and energetic benevolence, in raising merit from obscurity, and adding to the number of able and faithful ministers.

Rev. John Mack, late of Clipstone, had incautiously entered the ranks of the army in early life. He afterwards became acquainted with the power of true religion, which he exemplified in the humble station allotted him, and acquired the esteem and confidence of the superior officers, who soon found it their interest to commit to him the management of some important concerns belonging to his detachment. Brought up in Scotland, and having talents for the ministry, he obtained a license from one of the presbyteries, and commenced preaching in the army, and wherever he had opportunity.

On leaving the north he was stationed awhile at Margate, where he was baptised, and communed with the church under the pastoral care of Mr. Atkinson. In the month of February he was suddenly ordered, with other comrades, to repair to Leicester, in consequence of some disturbances among the operatives, but which had happily subsided before the arrival of the military. On the

following sabbath Mr. Mack attended at Harvey Lane, and returned to his quarters highly delighted, without knowing that he had been hearing the author of the celebrated sermon on Modern Infidelity, whom he had heard of only as some minister at Cambridge. Mr. Hall, hearing of his zeal and religious activity, sought him out, and entered into conversation with him; receiving at the same time his credentials, he pressingly invited him to his pulpit. Mr. Mack preached in his regimentals several times with great acceptance; but having accidentally discovered with whom he had so unexpectedly been brought into contact, he felt much embarrassed, and could scarcely be persuaded to enter the pulpit afterwards, if Mr. Hall was present.

Mr. Hall however was so much charmed with his fine sense and native elocution, and so persuaded of his capacity for extensive usefulness, that he resolved to make an effort to obtain his discharge, and to have him educated for the ministry. The commanding officer threw every obstacle in the way, alleging that he could not part with such a man, and could get no one to supply his place. At length he agreed to yield him up, on condition that two substitutes were provided in his stead, both Scotsmen, or that a hundred pounds be paid for his freedom. Mr. Hall accepted the latter alternative, raised the money by private subscription, and prepared the way for his being sent to Bristol academy in the following August.

Meanwhile, the congregation at Clipstone being destitute of a minister, Mr. Hall warmly recommended him to their attention. After preaching there a short time, the people invited him to the pastoral office, and agreed to wait for his stated services till he had finished his education. Mr. Mack was publicly ordained in March 1815, when Mr. Hall delivered an appropriate address, founded on 1 Tim. iv. 16. The leading object of the discourse was to exhibit the importance and necessity of maintaining a high degree of spirituality, in order to real or extensive usefulness, and that this can be secured only by the most vigilant circumspection. The excellent preacher then proceeded to enumerate the various evils and temptations attendant upon the ministerial office, having a special reference to the peculiar circumstances of the newly-ordained pastor, which demanded much watchfulness and prayer, or they would impair his spiritual energies and impede his usefulness. The discourse closed with a charge the most solemn and interesting that can be conceived, on the importance of personal religion and ministerial fidelity; the impression on all who heard it was deep and lasting. The preacher seemed indeed to have reserved for his friend on this occasion the richest treasures of his wisdom, and the warmest effusions of his heart.

Mr. Mack laboured nearly eighteen years at Clipstone with much acceptance and success, was generally admired for the brilliance of his genius



and the benevolence of his disposition, and died at the early age of forty two, Nov. 5th 1831.

Not many months after Mr. Hall had commenced his acquaintance with Mr. Mack, and indulged the hope of a long career of public usefulness, he was called to mourn the loss of his earlier friend, Mr. Robinson, who had been his powerful coadjutor in the town of Leicester. At the following anniversary of the bible association he delivered a splendid eulogium on his character and usefulness, representing him as the great focus of piety and benevolence, as the sun and centre of the moral system, in the town and neighbourhood. Merging in the admiration of departed excellence all consciousness of his own individual weight and influence, he was himself content to be only the humble follower of the wise and good, to share their labours, and triumph in their success. That his private sentiments were in perfect unison with those publicly avowed on this occasion, is sufficiently evident from a letter addressed to an intimate friend about the same time, in which he uses the following strong and energetic language. "We have had an irreparable loss in the removal of dear Mr. Robinson; it has been a most affecting event, and has left a chasm which can never be filled up." Nothing indeed was wanting in any situation to conciliate his esteem and ensure his warmest attachment, but a mind capable of reciprocating his own enlarged and enlightened

sentiments: with sectarian bigotry and priestly arrogance he could have no alliance.

Great impediments having been thrown in the way of missionary exertions in India, by the agents of the East India Company, supported by the legislative acts of the Government, Mr. Hall was induced, in the latter part of 1812, to prepare for publication an "Address, on the renewal of the East India charter," which was expected to take place shortly afterwards. The address was printed on a broad sheet, circulated in the form of a letter among the ministers of state, some of the royal family, several members of parliament, and the court of proprietors in Leadenhall street, and it is believed with considerable effect.

Such was the power granted by the existing charter that no missionary could set his foot on the Indian shore, without permission from the agents of this chartered company; those who visited that land of darkness for the righteous and benevolent purpose of disseminating the gospel among the natives were under the necessity of going by the circuitous route of America, and on their arrival in the eastern territory to place themselves under the protection of a foreign state. With admirable consistency the government and the company extended unlimited toleration to every degrading and sanguinary form of idolatry and superstition, while they proscribed the free exercise of a religion which they themselves pro-

fessed; and CHRISTIANITY, be it said, became the sole object of their intolerance. Only a year or two before, the infidel agents of the power that ruled in India, contemplated nothing less than the recal of all the missionaries, episcopal and dissenting, under the hypocritical pretense that their labours would endanger the safety of the oriental empire.

Mr. Hall restrained much of his indignation on this occasion, and in a calm and dignified manner exposed the injustice and absurdity of the system, its utter repugnance to the dictates of religion and the maxims of sound policy, to the right of private judgment, the inalienable prerogative of human nature, and its evident tendency to subvert all the foundations of religion and morality. He also enlarges on the advantages which the natives would derive from the diffusion of christianity among them, independently of the eternal prospects it unfolds, by its influence on every department of speculative and moral truth, the elevation it gives to character, the enormous sacrifice of human life it would prevent by superseding the reigning superstition, and the additional security imparted to the British possessions in the east.

In stating the claims of those societies whose cause he advocated, he says "all that is desired on this occasion is, simply that the word of God may be permitted to have free course. Whether it be consistent with sound policy for the British government to employ any part of its resources

in aid of the cause of christianity in India, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss, while its friends confine their views to a simple toleration, and request merely that its teachers may not be harrassed or impeded in their attempts to communicate religious instruction to the natives. Before such a liberty can be withheld, the principles of toleration must be abandoned; nor will it be practicable to withhold it without exciting a sanguinary persecution, where men are to be found who will eagerly embrace the crown of martyrdom, rather than relinquish the performance of what appears to them a high and awful duty. And what a spectacle will it exhibit, for a christian government to employ force in the support of idolatry, and the suppression of truth!"

"It will surely appear surprising to posterity that a nation, glorying in the purity of its faith as its highest distinction, should suffer its transactions in the east to be characterised by a spirit of infidelity, as though it were imagined the foundations of empire could be laid only in apostasy and impiety; at a moment too when Europe, convulsed to its centre, beholds these frantic erections swept with the besom of destruction. Their astonishment will be the more excited when they compare our conduct in this instance with the unprecedented exertions we are making for the diffusion of religious knowledge in other directions; with the operations of the Bible society which, formed for the sole purpose of conveying the oracles of God



to all quarters, has risen to an importance that entitles it to be regarded as a national concern; with the Bartlett's Buildings society, employed for upwards of a century in attempts to convert the natives of Hindoostan; with the numerous translations going on in all the dialects of the east, to which the learned both in Europe and in Asia are looking with eager expectation. When posterity shall compare the conduct we are reprobating with these facts, how great their astonishment to find the piety of the nation has suffered itself to lie prostrate at the feet of a few individuals, the open or disguised enemies of the faith of Jesus."

The object of this eloquent appeal was partially accomplished in 1813, by an act of the legislature, which in renewing the charter of the East India Company, introduced some clauses favourable to the design of evangelising the natives of Bengal, but with such limitations and restrictions as still reserved to the company at home and their agents abroad the power of defeating or counteracting in their dominions any missionary enterprise, which is still to be regarded as a matter of sufferance and not of right. The time is now approaching when this subject must undergo another parliamentary revision; and if the charter be renewed it can only be for a short time, and under such circumstances as to prevent its being any longer inimical to the principles of religious liberty, and the propagation of the gospel in the

eastern territory. The feelings of the whole nation have been too long outraged by the conduct of the East and West Indian Proprietors, in the treatment of their slaves and dependents, to permit such a mass of infamy and corruption to exist under any government that might be disposed, as hitherto, to palliate or continue an organised system of crime and of cruelty that would disgrace the most savage nation upon earth.

It was but seldom that the brethren of the Baptist Association in Northamptonshire could prevail on Mr. Hall to lend his assistance, though so intimately connected with the leading members of that body. Besides his general aversion to public meetings, he saw in all permanent associations a tendency to interfere with the right of private judgment, a principle over which he watched with the utmost jealousy, and believed that the independence of the churches would be best preserved by remaining in their individual capacity. His dislike of every thing that approached to presbyterianism was equal to that entertained for episcopasy; in his view both were alike abhorrent from the simplicity of the christian institution, and the principles that governed the primitive church; and perceiving no immediate good but much inconvenience to arise from large annual meetings, he withdrew his attendance, but remained in harmony with all the brethren.

Previous to this, and in compliance with their

urgent request, he wrote the Circular Letter for the year 1813, on "Hearing the Word," which adds another monument to his talents and piety. The beautiful simplicity and meekness of wisdom which characterise this production, give an additional charm to the instruction it exhibits on the interesting subject of personal and experimental religion; and the lovers of genuine piety will find in it an exquisite treat, the savour of which will not easily be forgotten. In fact it is in these smaller unpretending pieces, written without effort, and intended chiefly for the edification of common christians, that we are to look for the finest specimens of the author's genius, and the richest effusion of religious and moral sentiments.

In this small tract the wisdom of God in the appointment of a standing ministry, its peculiar adaptation to convey impressive instruction, the importance it derives from divine appointment, its efficacy from the promises of God, accompanied with the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is accustomed to follow in the footsteps of a preached gospel, and the salvation attendant on 'the hearing of faith,' are among the topics briefly noticed in the introduction, followed with a specification of the dispositions necessary to the understanding and right reception of the truth.

An admonition in reference to certain individuals pretending to be judges of orthodoxy, while they are in reality spots and blemishes in all our congregations, is too striking to be overlooked.

“ There is a class of hearers,” says the writer, “ who have their favourite topics, to which they are so immoderately attached that they are offended if not brought forward on all occasions ; while there are others at least of equal importance, which they can seldom be prevailed upon to listen to with patience. Some are never pleased but with doctrinal statements ; they are in raptures while the preacher is insisting on the doctrines of grace, and the privileges of God’s people ; but when he proceeds to inculcate the practical improvement of these doctrines, and the necessity of adorning the profession of them by the virtues of a holy life, their countenances fall, and they make no secret of their disgust. Others are all for practical preaching, while they have no relish for that truth which can alone sanctify the heart. But as it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. It is difficult to suppose that such persons love the word of God *as* the word of God ; if they did, every part of it, in its due proportion and proper place, would be acceptable. It is possible, in consequence of the various exigencies of the christian life, that there may be seasons to which some views may be peculiarly suited, and on that account heard with superior advantage and delight ; but this is perfectly consistent with an impartial attachment to the whole of revelation. But to feel an habitual distaste to instruc-



tion the most solid and scriptural, unless it be confined to a few favourite topics, is an infallible indication of a wrong state of mind. It is only by yielding the soul to the impression of every divine communication and discovery, that the several graces which enter into the composition of the new creature are nourished and sustained. As the perfection of the christian system results from the symmetry of its several parts, in which there is nothing redundant, nothing disproportioned, and nothing defective; so the beauty of the christian character consists in its exhibiting an adequate impress and representation of the whole. If there be any particular branch of the word of God to which we are habitually indisposed, we may generally conclude *that* is precisely the part which we most need; and instead of indulging our distaste, we ought seriously to set ourselves to correct the mental disease which has given occasion to it."

The pointed rebuke to drowsy hearers, so happily expressed, and the remedy it prescribes, well admits of being here repeated; perhaps we may never meet with it again in so fine a style. "The practice of sleeping in places of worship, a practice we believe not prevalent in any other place of public resort, is not only a gross violation of the advice we are giving to hear the word with attention, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge it. If the apostle indignantly enquires of the Corinthians

whether they had not ‘houses to eat and drink in;’ may we not with equal propriety ask those who indulge in this practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory? A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would in most cases put a stop to this abomination: and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the word who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the gluttony which absolutely disqualifies him for receiving it?”

There is also a practice too prevalent among professors of religion, which the writer has briefly noticed, and which requires to be corrected;—that of remarking on the talents of the preacher after hearing a sermon, instead of dwelling on the subject that has been discussed, which but too seldom forms a part of any subsequent conversation. “If you choose to converse on what you have been hearing, a practice which may be very edifying, let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty and glory of those great things of God which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of that great apostle, any more than the three thousand who at the day of pentecost were pricked in the heart; their minds were too much occupied by

the momentous truths they had been listening to, to leave room for such reflections. Yet this is the only kind of religious conversation, if it deserve the appellation, in which too many professors engage." This is a sore evil, not likely to be remedied, until christians generally will take the trouble of making themselves better acquainted with theological subjects, and acquire a capacity to distinguish and to relish the things that are more excellent.

This small treatise, like the former, was republished in a cheap form by the Tract Society, to procure for it a wider circulation and an additional degree of usefulness; and it may readily be imagined the time must come when all the productions of this great writer will be read wherever the english language is understood.

The year 1814 commenced with some missionary engagements of a very interesting nature, into which Mr. Hall entered with renewed energy and delight. Mr. Eustace Carey had offered his services, being desirous of following in the footsteps of his venerable uncle at Serampore, and was now to be set apart to missionary labour in that quarter.

Arriving at Leicester he preached at Harvey Lane, January 16th, to a crowded audience, on behalf of the baptist mission. Mr. Hall, one of the auditors part of the day, was deeply affected with the touching and tender appeals of the

preacher, as were also many others around him. In the evening he preached a sermon for the mission at the chapel of his highly esteemed friend Mr. Mitchell, where in the warmth of his zeal for the cause he outstripped all measured language, and poured forth his indignation against its sceptical opponents in a style of peculiar vehemence. His feelings had been roused by observing in the *Edinburgh Review* an article on Methodism and Missions, known afterwards to have been written by a Church Dignitary, who with “the levity of a buffoon, joined to a heart of iron and a face of brass,” had more than insinuated that the christianity attempted to be propagated by the missionaries at Serampore, would if adopted prove a serious injury to the natives, and that they are much happier and more virtuous under their present institutions.

Mr. Carey having taken an affecting leave of his friends at Leicester, in the view of a final departure for India, accompanied Mr. Hall to Northampton, where a public meeting was held on the 19th for his being set apart for missionary labour. Mr. Hall, with his accustomed modesty, declined delivering what is called a Charge to his young friend, to which he found himself totally unequal, and proposed only to offer some advice. In his “Address” on this occasion, which was afterwards published, he states the requisite qualifications of a missionary to be, a decided predilection for the work, the result of serious and



deliberate consideration ; a singular and entire devotedness, abandoning all right in himself, not counting life itself dear, in comparison of the great object in view ; and above all ‘ a spirit of faith,’ an unshaken persuasion of the promises of God respecting the future triumphs of the gospel.

“ It is impossible,” says Mr. Hall, “ that the mind of a missionary should be too much impressed with the beauty, glory and grandeur of the kingdom of Christ, as it is unfolded in the oracles of the old and new testament ; nor with the certainty of the final accomplishment of those oracles, founded on the faithfulness and omnipotence of their author. To those parts of scripture his attention should especially be directed, in which the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts, so to speak, the whole force and splendour of inspiration in depicting the future reign of the Messiah, together with that astonishing spectacle of dignity, purity and peace which his church will exhibit, when ‘ having the glory of God,’ her bounds shall be commensurate with those of the habitable globe, when every object on which the eye shall rest will remind the spectator of the commencement of a new age, in which the tabernacle of God is with men and he dwells among them. His spirit should be imbued with that sweet and tender awe which such anticipations will infallibly produce, whence will spring a generous contempt of the world, and an ardour bordering on impatience to be employed,

though in the humblest sphere, as the instrument of accelerating such a period. For compared to this destiny in reserve for the children of men, compared to this glory, invisible at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has hitherto shone upon the world, is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it, the shadow of death."

The English government having in some measure relaxed its restrictions on missionary exertions in India, and extended to the teachers of christianity a kind of conditional protection, by modifications lately introduced into the Company's charter, Mr. Hall did not forget to eulogise those statesmen and legislators who had by their influence and their eloquence accelerated this event, which though amounting only to a partial concession is entitled to be considered as the pledge of a much greater triumph in time to come.

Turning again to the candidate before him, the preacher endeavours to fortify him for the arduous undertaking in prospect, by pointing out the magnitude of the object which christianity contemplates, the motives that should stimulate his exertions, and the manner in which his mission should be fulfilled; reminding him how much higher his aim must be than that of mere politicians or philanthropists, who might be disposed to favour the attempt of evangelising the idolatrous inhabitants of India, as a convenient medium for

establishing a spiritual empire and dominion over them; but that neither civilization nor moralization can be permanently or extensively produced, except where christianity is allowed to develop those energies by which it sanctifies and prepares its recipients for a better world.

On the spirit and manner in which the gospel should be preached, both at home and abroad, a manner so highly exemplified in Mr. Hall's own ministry, there occurs an admonition which ought to be engraven on the heart of every one who labours in the word and doctrine with any hope of success; and if that disinterested and holy fervour were more generally prevalent, we should soon see the happy day so long wished for by the church. In the order of means no great revival of religion is to be expected, until the christian ministry is replenished with a larger portion of apostolic zeal, and the number of those encreased who shall enter more fully into the spirit of the sacred office, and discharge its duties more in the way that is here recommended. "Preach the gospel, my dear brother," said this blessed man on the present occasion, "preach it with a constant recollection of its character and aim. Preach it with a perpetual view to eternity, and with the simplicity and affection with which you would address your dearest friends, were they assembled round your dying bed. While others are ambitious to form the citizen of earth, be it yours to train him for heaven, to raise up the temple of God from among

the ancient desolations, to contribute your part towards the formation and perfection of that eternal society which will flourish in inviolable purity and order, when all human associations shall be dissolved, and the princes of this world shall come to nought."

On the manner of introducing the gospel to the heathen Mr. Hall recommends that it be done inoffensively, and with the greatest simplicity, not so much by encountering error as by establishing truth, and by gentleness and forbearance conciliating the minds of the hearers. "I would not advise you to devote much time to an elaborate confutation of the Hindoo or Mahometan systems, which is calculated to irritate and disgust; but let your instruction be in the form of a testimony. Let it, with respect to the mode of exhibiting it, though not to the spirit of the teacher, be dogmatic, 'testifying' repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, "when you denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, great mildness and affection are requisite, to prevent such representations from exciting disgust. What is awful and alarming in christianity should be softened and tempered by a persuasive tenderness of address. Let it be your care to divest religion of whatever is unlovely and repulsive, that it may appear not only pure but gentle, not only majestic but amiable, equally favourable to the enjoyment and the communication of happiness."



Mr. Hall's encomium on the managers of Indian affairs for their imagined liberality was a little premature, for when another missionary was to be sent out a few months afterwards, the Court of Directors in Leadenhall street, attempted to defeat the new provisions of the charter, by refusing a passage to the missionary, until an appeal having been made on behalf of the Society, the objection was overruled by the Board of Controul. Mr. Yates was accordingly set apart at Leicester, for missionary labour in Bengal, on Aug. 31st 1814. The ordination prayer, remarkably full and comprehensive, was offered up by Mr. Hall, with imposition of hands. The charge was delivered by Dr. Ryland, who, in allusion to the late unworthy opposition, selected for his text the appropriate words of the apostle: 'Forbidding us to speak to the gentiles that they might be saved.'

Mr. Hall was soon afterwards called to bear a trial which he had never before experienced, and of the severity of which he had no previous conception, though it was none other than is common to man. But under all his afflictions, from whatever quarter they proceeded, he exemplified the same spirit of profound submission to the will of God, the same reliance on his paternal care and goodness, as he had all along displayed amidst excruciating pain and suffering, and was in all respects a pattern of humility and self-abasement. His passiveness in the hands of God bore

an adequate proportion to the elevation of his piety, and the ardour of his attachment to the object of his adoration, delighting under all circumstances to sink into nothing before Him.

His first son, named Robert, was born in May 1813, and was esteemed a singularly lovely and interesting child, though Mr. Hall himself, not being at all partial to boys, took no particular delight in him. The infant Robert was however so generally admired for his remarkably intelligent appearance, and supposed resemblance to the beloved father, that he soon became a great favourite among the ladies; and persons of distinction passing through Leicester, would sometimes send their servants to request the favour of the child being brought to the inn where they were stopping, for the pleasure of bestowing upon him their caresses, and of beholding in miniature another Robert Hall. Care however was taken to conceal these flattering attentions from the father, who knew nothing of it, or it may easily be imagined he would not have permitted this species of adulation.

On the birth of a child the devotion of this holy man was raised to a still higher pitch, and the fire upon the altar was kindled with fresh ardour. In addition to the regular discharge of domestic duties at all other times, Mr. Hall was impressed with a special degree of responsibility on these occasions, and not only devoted himself almost entirely to prayer, but led his family to the mercy seat with encreasing importunity.

Soon after the birth of little Robert, the nurse on that occasion, herself a religious person, enquired of a friend on a monday morning, "Well, had you a good sermon yesterday? If the people are not profited by Mr. Hall's ministry, how great will be their condemnation! Why, said she, the good man does nothing but pray; and we have been praying ever since I have been here. He gets up at five in the morning, and may be heard praying in his study till six o'clock. He calls the family to prayer three times a day on these occasions, and then in the evening talks to them separately on the necessity and importance of personal religion." Such was Mr. Hall in his domestic capacity, commanding his children and his household after him, and walking before them with a perfect heart. Those who have insinuated a degree of inattention or neglect, were but imperfectly acquainted with his real character.

The admired little Robert was not born for a terrestrial life; in the course of nine months he was taken suddenly ill, and died of the croup in about four hours, almost before any real danger was apprehended, in February 1814. Like the pearly dew-drop,

‘He sparkled—was exhaled,  
Then went to heaven.’

This sudden and unexpected event had a most agonising effect on the pious father, who had not been aware of the strength of his attachment. As soon as the child expired in its mother's arms,

he immediately fell prostrate on the spot, and amidst sobs and tears cried out, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord—yea blessed be the name of the Lord.” In this position he continued for several minutes, uttering the most melting supplications for an entire acquiescence in the divine will, acknowledging at the same time and adoring the infinite wisdom, purity and justice of God, in all his dealings with him.

Early next morning he visited the breathless corpse, and several times aday afterwards, sitting by its side, and dwelling with indescribable emotions on the solemn consideration, that “a part of himself was then in eternity.” Thither also he took his adventurous flight, and followed in imagination the departed spirit into the unseen world. He occupied this painful post of observation several hours of the day, was with difficulty drawn from the spot, and unwilling that the child should be removed out of his sight. In the awful presence of death he delighted to meditate, to pray, and to prostrate himself before the great Eternal; and amidst these solemn exercises he composed two of the most extraordinary sermons he was ever known to deliver.

On the sabbath following this bereavement, he appeared in the pulpit at the usual hour, his countenance overspread with peculiar solemnity, and beaming with the devout and tender aspirations of a celestial intercourse, so that no one could be at



a loss to perceive that he had been succoured from above. His breaking through, in this instance, the modern custom of not appearing in public worship immediately after a domestic calamity, was admirably sustained by a reference to the example of David on the loss of his infant son, and taking for his text the memorable words of that holy man: 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' 2 Sam. xii. 23.

While the child was living, but doomed to die, the afflicted saint fasted, prayed and wept, if peradventure his days might still be prolonged; but when the event was decided, he evinced his fortitude and deep submission to the will of heaven. He arose from the earth, changed his mourning attire, and went up to the house of the Lord. The ordinary custom of abstaining from public worship after some family bereavement, observed the preacher, was accommodating ourselves to the false maxims of the world, and injurious to our spiritual interests. In a season of calamity whither should we go but to him, who alone is able to sustain and comfort us, and to the place where he has promised to meet with us and bless us.

He then proceeded to consider the words of David as implying a belief of the safe and happy state of his deceased child, and the hope of being shortly with him, not in the regions of death, but in a state of blessedness; and that the words admitted of no other consistent interpretation. And while the scriptures afford no direct evidence of

the final state of such as die in infancy, there is enough that is indirect and analogical to sustain the opinion of the pious in all ages on this subject, and to console the minds of bereaved parents with the hope of their future blessedness. Though it would not be safe in many instances to reason from the divine compassion, seeing that God is and must be the decided enemy of sin, and all claims on his regard are for ever forfeited; and though it would not become us to dogmatise on a subject where the scriptures have preserved a mysterious and awful silence; yet we may be allowed to indulge a hope not inconsistent with their decision, but founded on reasonable probabilities in accordance with what is more fully revealed. Unconscious beings, it was conceived, could hardly be placed on a level with accountable moral agents, nor be brought under the same rule as probationary beings, who are finally to be judged according to their works. Yet as all are by their fæderal relation to the first Adam, the subjects of inherent depravity as well as of relative guilt, shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath; there is no conceivable way of salvation for any of the human race, whether infant or adult, but through the intervention of a Mediator, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is as easy for an omnipotent agent to effect this change on a passive and unconscious subject, as on one in a state of active and voluntary opposition to his

will ; and the tendencies to holiness thus produced are no otherwise mysterious than are the innate tendencies to sin, arising from our fallen nature. The scriptures speak of some who are ‘ sanctified from the womb ;’ and it may be hoped that those who die in infancy, having believing parents, are thus meetened for the kingdom of heaven.

The heavenly-minded preacher, while he acknowledged the subject did not admit of such demonstration as might be wished, maintained nevertheless, that there was enough in the general tenour of scripture to quiet his own apprehensions, and to reconcile pious parents to similar bereavements. In conversation he would sometimes express his opinion by saying, that if dying infants were not in the fullest sense “ saved,” he had no doubt whatever but they were “ safe,” and would not fall into condemnation.

On the same occasion he afterwards preached from 1 Cor. xv. 26. ‘ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.’ This sermon made an unusually deep impression on the audience, several were awakened to the consideration of their eternal interests, and its beneficial effects were seen and heard of for some years afterwards.

In the course of 1814, as well as at other times, several persons came from other parts of the country and settled at Leicester, in order to enjoy Mr. Hall’s ministry. The church under his care was by this time encreased to three times its former

number, and the congregation in proportion. It was found necessary once more to enlarge the place of worship; but Mr. Hall at first resisted the proposal, fearing he was doing very little good, and that the expense would be inconvenient to the people. His ministerial exertions meanwhile were unbounded, even beyond his strength, his prayer for usefulness incessantly importunate, and nothing seemed to content him, short of an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the people.

Towards the close of the year he was often very poorly, low and languid, fearing that his life and labours would soon be ended; but amidst these infirmities, his ministry exhibited an encreasing concern for the salvation of his hearers. He became more and more affectionate in his public addresses, more solicitous and urgent in beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, often weeping while he warned them to flee from the wrath to come. A savour of the name of Christ breathed throughout his ministry; 'the sabbath was called a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable.'



## SECTION XVI.

A. D. 1815, 1816.

EARLY in 1815 Mr. Hall commenced a course of lectures on the divine attributes, a subject on which he loved at all times to expatiate. The purity and perfection of the divine nature, and its incomprehensible grandeur, not only presented to him a theme which gave the greatest expansion to his faculties, but which filled him with ravishing delight. Elijah's flight could scarcely be more rapturous than were the soarings of his powerful mind, as he approached the sublimities of the eternal world, and indulged in visions of the deity. There was frequently such an unearthly grandeur in his conceptions and enunciations on this awe-inspiring subject, that the audience felt in some measure as Israel did, when the mountain burned with fire and uttered its thunders, while the man of God was in communion with his Maker, and receiving the law at his mouth. The printed outlines afford but a faint idea of what these sermons really were, nor do those which appear in a more finished state bear any adequate comparison with the oral addresses he frequently delivered; they

want the energy, the lofty flights, the holy excitement, and many of those sudden flashes of thought and feeling which gleamed from his eyes, and glowed upon his lips.

In the month of March he preached the anniversary sermon for the Leicester Bible-society to an overflowing congregation, which was with difficulty prevented from loudly uttering its applause, while it breathed out expressions of admiration and delight. His subject was the efficacy and perfection of divine revelation, from Psal. xix. 7. Adverting in respectful terms to the book of common prayer, which the episcopal society have raised nearly to a level with the sacred scriptures, and made its preservation and preeminence a pretext for disclaiming all connection with the British and Foreign Bible-society, Mr. Hall observed, that could the venerable compilers of that formulary know how their pious intentions were perverted by their professed successors; could they conceive that what was intended as subsidiary only to devotion, was preferred or even placed in competition with the Bible itself, as is done by making it an inseparable adjunct, it would afflict them in their present state of glory and felicity. And with respect to those members of the establishment who entertained such preposterous ideas of their liturgy, they were scarcely entitled to the name of Protestants, whose peculiar glory it was to derive their religion wholly from the volume of revelation, and made 'the sufficiency of the scriptures'

the fundamental article of their faith. If protestantism be founded on this principle, why not aid the circulation of the scriptures, without note or comment, and unaccompanied with a merely human composition? Why suspect the bible of an opposite or injurious tendency, if the book of common prayer be indeed derived from that source, and in perfect harmony with it?

We have heard, says the *Edinburgh Review*, “divers denunciations from high-churchmen as to the danger of circulating the bible without the book of common prayer. According to their estimate, it is better to withhold the one, unless it can be duly qualified by the other. Are we then to conclude that there is no safety beyond the precincts of their own church; that the religion of Protestants is only a safe way to salvation when that way is paced in certain trammels, and swept with a white surplice? Or is the spiritual improvement of mankind of real importance in so far only as it may be circumscribed within the boundaries of episcopacy?” Such indeed would seem to be the opinion of these worshippers of a state religion, who would no doubt feel themselves nearer home on the banks of the Tiber.

On the 15th of May, Mr. Fuller closed his laborious career, after a severe illness; and on the following sabbath at Harvey Lane Mr. Hall delivered a funeral discourse, in which he very happily delineated the character and talents of his departed

friend, his singular ability as a preacher, his intrepidity as a public champion for the truth, and his indefatigable labours in the missionary cause. A day or two afterwards Mr. Hall attended the interment of his deceased friend, with feelings very much depressed, and pronounced the funeral oration; but in attempting to deliver part of it from notes previously prepared, a practice to which he was not accustomed, he was very much embarrassed, and did not speak with his usual energy and freedom. Being afterwards urged to print what he had so ineffectually delivered, he resolutely refused, saying it would not be doing justice to the expectations of the public, nor to the memory of his friend, to publish such a “wretched piece of inanity!”

The high esteem he entertained for Mr. Fuller, notwithstanding the rigidity of his general system, with which he could not sympathise, was expressed on all occasions, but never more feelingly than in the present instance, in a letter to one of his correspondents. “He was in many respects,” says Mr. Hall, “the most memorable man it has ever been my happiness to know; and his loss will be deplored as irreparable. He possessed good sense in a more perfect degree than any person I ever knew, embraced every object with a clearness, facility and precision, almost peculiar to himself. He certainly possessed genius in a very high degree, but it was more a modification of intellect than a vigour of imagination, though in the latter



faculty he was not defective. I loved and esteemed him more than I can express ; and how his loss can be supplied in the mission, I am at an utter loss to conjecture. But God is alsufficient."

Dr. Ryland having been requested to prepare some memoirs of the life and labours of his lamented friend, looked to Mr. Hall for some assistance ; and he readily consented to revise the manuscript, and also to contribute, if required, a delineation of character. After looking over a few pages of the work, and expressing his general approbation, he ventured to suggest some corrections and emendations. The pious author, not relishing this proposal, did not submit to Mr. Hall's inspection another line of his manuscript, and the intended delineation was never called for. Mr. Hall could not therefore be implicated in the execution of that singular performance, nor entitled to any share in its reputation. But though the proposed contribution was never demanded, he afterwards gave a most masterly portrait of his deceased friend, in his prefatory memoir of Mr. Toller, and also in the preface of another of his publications, no one being more desirous than himself, of paying respectful homage to the memory of a man who combined in his character so much energy and usefulness.

The author of an earlier memoir of Mr. Fuller, not being at all aware of Mr. Hall's preengagement, which after all was only nominal ; and not wishing to publish a single line which did not meet

*his* approbation, solicited the favour of his *revision*, previously to the copy being sent to press; and not, as has been erroneously stated, a “review” of the work, after it had been printed. Mr. Hall, at first startled with this proposal, quickly announced it to his authorised biographer, with a note of “disapprobation,” and as quickly rejected the proposal on the ground of a prior engagement. The writer, though decidedly unwilling to commit his manuscripts to other hands, whose exclusive competence he did not very well comprehend, earnestly entreated Mr. Hall’s acceptance of his papers, to be disposed of in any way he might prefer. This he said he could not in equity consent to, and recommended the author by all means to proceed with his publication. Whatever might be his abrupt “disapprobation” on the first announcement, and before he had seen a single line of the work, the favourable opinion he afterwards condescended to express, is too well known to need any repetition. When a second edition of the work was demanded, his corrections were again solicited; and his reply was, he did not recollect a paragraph that he wished to see altered. These circumstances would not have been detailed, but for the garbled statements which have already appeared in print, for the unworthy purpose, as it would seem, of throwing discredit on the author and his performance, by insinuating, what is not true, that Mr. Hall was unfriendly to the undertaking.

Mr. Hall had had a long-standing intimacy with Mr. Phillips, pastor of the Independent congregation at Clapham, to whose superintendence he committed some of his earlier publications. In the month of June Mr. Phillips visited Leicester, delivered an interesting discourse on the sabbath morning, and spent several days very happily with his friend, by whom he was baptised previously to his return to Clapham. The interesting correspondence which in all probability took place on this subject has not been permitted to transpire, though it would have been highly acceptable, especially as Mr. Hall's later views of baptism have not been given to the public, otherwise than that he did not regard it as essential to communion, because not essential to salvation.

Mr. Hall was so much attached to his excellent friend at Clapham, that he scarcely ever went to London without paying him a visit; and on one of these occasions, a very amusing circumstance occurred. His love of retired friendship, of free and open conversation, it is well known, rendered him generally averse to the presence of a stranger, while those who were such were equally anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, and the privacy he sought could never be maintained. A popular minister from the west of England was introduced. Mr. Hall, at that moment, was not at all disposed for conversation, probably from the formal manner in which some topics were brought forward, and the apparent caution and reserve of the parties

present. Those who did not know him seemed to imagine that if they got into his company they must needs have something metaphysical or abstruse for the topic of conversation, though nothing was less congenial with his habits and feeling, or less adapted to engage his attention. If he was to be considered the arbiter and judge of doubtful points of speculation, having no practical result, very little could be elicited from him; he either manifested a silent indifference, or threw a shaft of pointed sarcasm.

After several unsuccessful efforts to provoke him to conversation, the stranger who had been introduced, very gravely proposed the enquiry, Whether in a future state the powers of the human mind would not expand and be enlarged to an indefinite degree. Mr. Hall, startled at the question, called out, what is that sir?—what is that? The question being carefully worded and deliberately repeated, Mr. Hall quickly replied, why so sir, why so? Why suppose the human mind indefinitely enlarged, any more than the human body? And if the body is to undergo this frightful encrease, then we should have a man whose nose would perforate the sun, his chin stretching across the atlantic, and battles fought in the wrinkles of his face. He must be a fool sir that can believe that.

In July Mr. Hall took an excursion into Wales, to preach and collect for the baptist mission. Upwards of fifty ministers, from all parts of the principality, assembled at Swansea, where the pub-



lic services lasted two days, and Mr. Hall preached on both evenings to a crowded and enraptured audience. The contributions in aid of the mission were small, the Welsh being as he said more distinguished for hospitality, than for their liberal donations.

Early in November he attended the ordination of his nephew, Mr. John Hall, who succeeded Mr. Fuller in the pastoral office at Kettering; and in the course of his address he reminded his amiable relative, that there is “a silent eloquence in character, by which the best sermons are most powerfully recommended.” In this discourse are blended, instructions on the ministry of the word, and also on the duties of the pastoral office; both of which are stated with much brevity, but in a manner which he had highly exemplified in his own spirit and deportment.

In the commencement of 1816, Mr. Hall preached his annual sermon for the baptist mission, and collected nearly a hundred pounds in his own congregation. From Acts xvi. 9, he deduced three plain and striking observations—that the heathen world needed moral ‘help’—that the means of helping them are in the power of british christians—and though much had been done already, the claims of the mission were neither weakened nor impaired. The few missionaries already sent might be compared, he said, to distant stars in the eastern hemisphere, a few glimmering lights, sufficient

only to render the surrounding gloom more visible and more awful.

Having attended a ministers' meeting at Clipstone and Arnsby, early in the spring, he returned home with a bad cold, the effects of which prevented his preaching for more than a month afterwards; and though no immediate danger was apprehended, after the first few days, his confinement from public labour spread a very general alarm among all classes. Churchpeople and dissenters unitedly expressed their anxiety, by flocking continually to his house to make enquiries, till it was found greatly to interrupt his repose; his immediate friends meanwhile continued instant in prayer for his recovery.

The annual meeting of the Branch Bible-society was now at hand, and every one eagerly looking forward for his appearance, to gladden their hearts with his animated and irresistible appeals. During this affliction however, he was not only restrained from public speaking, but from reading and close thinking, which it was feared might encrease the inflammatory symptoms he laboured under. But to a few of his religious visitors he breathed out the holy fervours of his soul, delighting himself in God, and in submission to his will; and all who were admitted to his sick apartment were greatly refreshed and edified by his calm and heavenly conversation.

One circumstance, highly illustrative of his character, occurred at the beginning of the present

illness. On saturday evening, previous to the first sabbath of his confinement, an amiable young minister of the Wesleyan connection called upon him with a letter of introduction from Dr. Fox of Derby. Having intimated that the object of his visit at Leicester was to preach for the Wesleyan sunday-school, in the afternoon and evening, and that he anticipated the pleasure of being a hearer at Harvey Lane in the morning; Mr. Hall immediately availed himself of this information, and pressed him very earnestly to supply his place, as he felt himself too unwell to enter the pulpit.

The young minister, whose talents were highly respectable, was not a little anxious to escape the responsibility of appearing as his substitute, but at the same time kindly offered to supply the place of any neighbouring minister who would come to his assistance. This Mr. Hall entirely declined, and assured him that his services would be peculiarly acceptable. The stranger eventually preached both parts of the day at Harvey Lane, when on announcing Mr. Hall's indisposition as an apology for his unexpected appearance in the pulpit, a sudden gloom spread itself over the congregation. The issue however was highly gratifying: two very interesting discourses were delivered, both the congregations mingled together, and crowded in to Harvey Lane, where a good collection was made for the charitable institution which had brought the preacher to Leicester. To Mr. Hall especially, this was a triumph which afforded him the highest

satisfaction, and it laid the foundation of a lasting attachment between the individuals who had on this occasion exhibited so fine a specimen of brotherly love and of christian charity, though they did not again come in contact till several years afterward.

The interesting preacher here referred to is Mr. Theophilus Lessey, who at the end of a brief but incorrect memoir in one of the monthly periodicals, has given a sketch of the talents and piety of our departed friend, which does great credit to his discriminating taste and judgment. "To the christian kindness, the condescension and affability of Mr. Hall," says the candid writer, "I am witness. When a stranger in Bristol, and comparatively unknown, he was pleased, after a missionary prayer-meeting in his own chapel, most courteously to notice me, and invite me to his abode, where I have had the pleasure of spending many hours in his company. More of these favoured opportunities might have been enjoyed, had it not been thought that his kindness would be but ill requited, by any thing like obtrusion on his goodness and his time."

"The writer," he adds, "has had the pleasure of knowing some few great men, and has been in company with many who seemed to be great; but such kindness and humility as Mr. Hall manifested, he has not often witnessed. No display of superiority was made, nothing that sought or took pleasure in attempts to cower into abject submis-



sion, the persons that were favoured with his company: it would rather seem that he was the person favoured, and as if he sought to raise himself up to those that listened to him with delightful attention. And who that was worthy of his presence could in any way abuse it; or but feel how amiable as well as awful, goodness is."

Being mercifully restored from his late illness, Mr. Hall resumed his public labours the last sabbath in April, when fourteen persons were baptised by an assistant preacher, giving fresh encouragement to his exertions, and calling forth the complacent smile of grateful and humble adoration. His reappearance in the pulpit, after so long an absence, filled every heart with joy and gladness; the people seemed to return to their former repast with a renewed and encreasing appetite, and feasted on the heavenly food which his richer thoughts had provided during his long and deep affliction. A peculiar solemnity rested on the congregation, which was deepened by the appearance of so many flocking to the standard of the cross, and strengthening the hands of their beloved pastor. A more memorable day was never known by the congregation at Leicester, several of whom declared it to be 'a day of holy convocation,' never to be forgotten.

Soon after his recovery from this illness he was strongly urged to visit Scotland on behalf of the baptist mission, and with the hope that the journey might tend to the establishment of his health.

A regard for the welfare of the congregation, an object ever near his heart, did not permit him to comply. Besides his prevailing aversion to engagements of this kind, his habitual infirmities rendered it nearly impracticable for him to sustain the exertion and fatigue that would be required, and the feebleness of his voice rendered it equally impossible for him to make himself audible to the multitudes that would be congregated in the cities of the north. He also alleged, that had ability been given, he could not incur so long an additional absence from his flock as this journey would require, especially after having been so recently laid aside by illness for nearly five weeks.

Mr. Hall was very much disconcerted by the unexpected appearance of his portrait in one of the periodicals for May; and though upon the whole a spirited likeness, taken apparently from a small model which had been made by an artist at Leicester, he conceived that it was intended as a burlesque. His hearers however, and people in general, thought so well of the design, that the magazine was bought up with great avidity for the sake of the print, to the no small annoyance of him whose image and superscription it evidently bore. But though Mr. Hall at all times retired with disgust from every thing like a showy and ostentatious popularity, he sometimes permitted his likeness to be taken, at the particular request of a friend, on condition only of its being kept in a private apartment. In truth he had as much

taste for drawings and portraits as persons in general have, but could seldom bear the sight of his own majestic countenance, on account of some glaring defect which he imagined it displayed, and was often known to turn away from the mirror with expressions of horror and disgust.

In June he preached a missionary sermon at Loughborough, but said he was so dissatisfied with it that he must stop another evening and preach a second sermon by way of "make-weight," to the no small gratification of the people. He returned home with a cold and hoarseness, but was not laid aside from preaching; at the same time every slight accession of disorder awakened the apprehension of his friends.

This was followed, in the month of August, with two spasmodic attacks in the chest of an alarming character, which obliged him for a little time to suspend his usual labours. His spirits were much depressed, and considerable languor pervaded the whole system. Mr. Hall himself scarcely expected to recover, but thought himself a dying man. A physician having given it as his opinion that the disorder in the back, from which he had long and severely suffered, was now removed to the stomach, he very calmly said to a friend, "I shall be gone now, if that opinion be right." His pious father died of spasm in the chest, after sustaining various attacks of the disorder for upwards of four years. Mr. Hall soon afterwards added, "On a review of my ministerial

labours during my whole life, I have but one consolation. So far as I know I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God ; no preconceived system, no fear of man, no influence of example, has biased my judgment, or fettered me in any respect ; my aim has been to include the whole system of revelation, and to exclude from it everything extraneous. But when I reflect on the *manner* in which I have fulfilled my ministry, I am overwhelmed with shame and confusion of face ; and should die in despair, were it not for the atonement of Christ Jesus my Lord and Saviour. That precious text, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,’ is worth a thousand volumes of divinity.” He then added, “I never in all my life saw so fully into the necessity of justification by faith alone, as I do at this moment. I should perish without it—utterly perish.”



## SECTION XVII.

A. D. 1816.

THE fame of Mr. Hall's writings having reached the United States, and excited the attention of their literary men, brought one of them on a visit to Leicester; and since that time many other of the Americans have spent a sabbath under his ministry, whenever they have visited this country. Rev. Dr. Mason, of New York, well known in the religious world, was advised by his physicians to undertake a voyage for the benefit of his health. Though born in America he was educated in Scotland, and paid his first visit there on landing on our shores; but having contemplated a tour of the continent, he determined on taking Leicester in his way to London, for the pleasure of seeing and hearing Mr. Hall.

Arriving on saturday evening, Nov. 2nd 1816, he stopped at an inn, and went next morning to Harvey-Lane meeting as an entire stranger. It was the day for administering the Lord's supper, and twelve persons were baptised and added to the church. Mr. Hall preached a discourse appropriate to the occasion, from Luke ix. 26, though

scarcely with his usual freedom and animation. In the administration of the baptismal rite he was singularly happy and impressive. Dr. Mason, though unknown, was observed to make unusual efforts to get near enough to view the ceremony, and stood leaning over the baptistry, close to the elbow of the administrator.

At the close of the service Dr. Mason retired to the inn, and afterwards attended the evening lecture. When public worship was ended he went into the vestry, and made himself known to Mr. Hall, who was of course not a little surprised to find who had been his auditor, and not a little mortified that he had not enjoyed some of his official assistance, which the stranger however from ill health was not able to afford.

When it became known who the mysterious person was that attended on the sabbath, a friend remarked to Mr. Hall that his sermons that day were scarcely equal to those he usually delivered, and expressed some regret that a popular minister from another quarter of the world had not come at a more auspicious period. His reply was replete with that diffidence and humility for which he was so remarkable. It has frequently been the case, said he, when any distinguished person has come from a distance, though totally unknown to me at the time, that I have not preached with any freedom or energy; and they must have gone away much disappointed. Well, he added, I am thankful in some respects that it is so. He who knows

the pride and vanity of the human heart, has taken this method to humble and abase me, and I bless his holy name for this reproof. If my ministry might but be rendered useful, I had rather serve the Lord with all humility of mind and with tears, than have merely the approbation and applause of my fellow men.

Mr. Hall took the stranger home with him after the evening service, and was charmed with his animated conversation. Next morning they enjoyed several hours together in the study, talking over the state of literature in the new and old world. In the afternoon a friend or two was invited to join the company, and to spend the evening. Dr. Mason showed himself a very lively and facetious companion, full of animation and theatrical effect, abounding in anecdote and historical detail, learned and acute, possessing very general information, and afforded, as the representative of American independence, an excellent specimen of physical and moral greatness.

In answer to some enquiries proposed by Mr. Hall, in reference to the state of religion in America, Dr. Mason acknowledged his inability to go much into detail. He had endeavoured, but found it impracticable, to obtain any statistical account, from which he could derive any satisfactory information of the actual encrease of christian professors, which however he believed to have been considerable. The Baptists are numerous in several of the States, and bear a full proportion

to other denominations ; but as to the camp meetings and great revivals, of which so much had been said in the different periodicals, he was of opinion that they had contributed very little to the cause of vital christianity. In many instances they were encouraged by persons who endeavoured to produce strong effects upon the passions, and had been followed by such a desolation of religious principle, that in those places where the greatest revivals had prevailed, little else was to be found than the briars and thorns of heresy and schism. In one instance in particular, a preacher of the name of Forrester, sent to Dr. Mason an account of a great revival and outpouring of the Spirit in his congregation, to be inserted in a religious journal ; but before this exhilarating intelligence had time to circulate from the press, the writer of the article sent word that the wonderful work was all at an end, and that its effects had unhappily disappeared in the course of a fortnight.

Dr. Mason might possibly be misinformed in some instances, or might be too incredulous of the good really effected by these revivals ; but this could hardly be the case as to what transpired in his own neighbourhood, and came under his own immediate observation. Yet he affirmed that a certain class of labourers in the production of sudden and extensive conversions, who had acquired celebrity in several of the American towns and cities, created an alarm by their approach, among all serious and well informed persons. For when



it was known that they were about to erect a chapel and collect a congregation, the inhabitants of the vicinage hastened to quit their dwellings, and retired to a distance, to avoid the nocturnal annoyances which followed the thunders and gesticulations of the orators and principal performers. In New York particularly, one of these newly-erected chapels was actually indicted as a public nuisance, and the interference of the magistrates demanded; so exceptionable and extraordinary was the enthusiasm that had been mixed up with those revivals. Property sunk in value, the adjoining tenements were uninhabited, and the surrounding scite became abandoned to these religious reveries.

Mr. Hall and the rest of the company heard this statement with surprise and pain, hoping at the same time that it applied only to the particular period referred to by the narrator; that some good might nevertheless have been accomplished, and that more would follow upon an enlightened ministry. It was then added by the visitor that the gospel had for a number of years been progressive in the United States, as in other parts of the christian world; and that while several of the revivalist congregations had become extinct, after their inflammatory materials were all evaporated, others of a more sober and genuine character had increased and multiplied. On the whole it did not appear from this verbal communication, that the state of religion in America was at that time much

more prosperous than in England, but that similar variations attend its general aspect.

Dr. Sprague, pastor of a presbyterian congregation in New York, in his interesting volume on American revivals, has shown that the failure in numerous instances was owing to the precipitance and incompetency of the agents employed, and the encouragement given to transient and injurious impressions. Many of the abuses he says, arose from the multiplication of meetings, beyond the ability of the minister and his most experienced assistants to superintend them, so as to call up persons having more zeal than knowledge to take the lead, sometimes to the misguiding of the young and indiscreet, and the offending of many. Much evil had also been occasioned by inducing persons too soon to make a public profession, and to possess a comfortable hope of their state, so that they thirst more for hope than for holiness, and seem to think the work to be done as soon as consolation begins. There is reason however to believe that the late revivals in America are of a more substantial character, and that much real good has been effected. It would be an enquiry highly worthy of a christian philosopher, how it has happened in the order of secondary causes, that America has so often been favoured with revivals of religion, while the rest of christendom has been left like Gideon's fleece, without any of those copious dews from above; and whether some solution might not be found in the fact, that the

United States have not at any period formed any part of the antichristian ten-horned beast, on which the curse of prophecy is denounced, but became the place where suffering piety found a refuge, and where the immortal Puritans were nourished and protected from the face of the serpent.

Following up the conversation, Dr. Mason said that the parochial clergy were in many places what they are with us. Where religion is either supported by the state, or blended with secular interests, it soon degenerates, and worldly men will gain an ascendancy wherever a worldly sanctuary is erected. The professed followers of Edwards and Bellamy, more recently of Hopkins, were said to have turned aside to vain jangling and endless disputation. Assuming it as a fundamental principle, that the moral system of the universe is of all supposable systems the best, seeing it is that which infinite wisdom has suffered to exist, they went on to assert that as the prevalence of moral evil forms an integral part of that system, it was as necessary to it as any other ingredient, and shall ultimately be rendered subservient to the greatest good; and that therefore it is not improper to consider the supreme Being as indirectly the author of sin. The Hopkinsians were also for reducing the doctrine of atonement to a mere expedient for the honourable exercise of mercy, a statement to which some socinians would not object, denying at the same time that the sacrifice of Christ was vicarious or substitutionary, and

maintaining that it was rather the means of releasing the moral Governor of the world from the necessity of inflicting punishment upon the guilty, than the proper or procuring cause of their salvation. Their creed recognises no fœderal relation between the first Adam and his posterity, any more than between succeeding parents and their children, and none between the second Adam and his spiritual seed; of course the imputation of sin, as well as of righteousness, is utterly exploded, and justification is nothing more than an exemption from punishment.

It was affirmed however that this class of theorists was not very numerous, nor had they produced any very serious effects on the American churches; their speculations are too scholastic for general acceptance, too dry and husky for the lovers of genuine piety. Among the congregations generally there is a growing attachment to evangelical principles, or the doctrine taught at the Reformation; and the writings of the elder Puritans are more and more in request. Dr. Mason himself gave the preference to Owen and Howe, the former of which he pronounced ‘the prince of divines;’ an opinion which Mr. Hall was not at that moment disposed to controvert, though his partiality for Howe is generally understood, and though, when it suited his humour, he has been heard to say that Owen was “a double Dutchman, floundering in the mud.” He was besides so much occupied with the luminous statement of



his friend, that he wished not to interrupt the narrative.

Dr. Mason proceeded to acknowledge that he had been educated in the tenets of Arminianism; that for many years his prejudices against the opposite system were most inveterate, and that perhaps no man had greater difficulties to overcome. On an impartial review he was led to conclude that those prejudices arose from two causes, which he believed to be common to most persons who discovered a violent predilection for such sentiments; namely, a false and distorted view of the Calvinistic system, and a heart secretly disaffected to the government of God. These, he could not help saying, were in his opinion the principal sources of error, and of opposition to the doctrines of grace. Why, said he, do men object to predestination or fore-appointment? Not because the thing itself is objectionable. If a man projects a scheme for effecting some great design, his wisdom is admired in proportion to the magnitude and comprehension of the plan, the time required for its various operations, the number of objects it embraces, and the subserviency to which they are all reduced in accomplishing the ultimate design. Why then should not that Wisdom be the object of our highest admiration, which projected the whole of the moral system, and combined the counteraction of its various parts, so as to produce the greatest and most important of all possible results. Why, of all intelligences, must

the supremely intelligent Agent be the only one to exist and to operate without a plan, without foresight or design. It is not to fore-ordination then that men object; the objection lies only against God's ordination. Every other scheme of fore-appointment may be wise and good but his.

Wishing to put him a little on his defence, Mr. Hall observed that divine foreknowledge implied only the certainty of the events foreknown; it did not imply their necessity, much less was it a necessitating cause; but that the same could hardly be said of divine decrees. The doctor quickly replied that nothing could be foreknown as certain, unless at the same time it was also foreknown that causes either did or would exist which would infallibly lead to such a result; and that as the connection between cause and effect is not only certain but absolutely necessary, so the foreknowledge of these causes implies not only the certainty but the absolute necessity of the effects produced. No effect can exist without a cause; if the cause be foreknown as a matter of certainty, the effect is foreknown as a matter of necessity.

The objection, he continued, does not lie against the abstract doctrine of decrees, but properly speaking, against the execution of those decrees; that is, in other words, against God's actual government of the world. He might propose what he pleased, and his purposes might exist from all eternity; but so long as they existed in the divine mind, they could not possibly furnish any ground

of objection, any more than the purposes of any other being which were never carried into effect. It is therefore the execution, not the existence of divine decrees, that forms the true ground of objection; or it is God's actual government of the world that is the object of man's aversion. For if in doing what pleaseth him in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, he does only what is fit and wise and proper to be done, there can be no objection to its being predetermined, unless it be wrong to determine beforehand to do what is right. Either therefore the supreme Being has no authority to govern the world he has made, or his government is unrighteous and unwise; otherwise there could be no objection to his governing it according to a plan which his sovereign will had before ordained.

Mr. Hall listened to the acute observations of his visitor with evident satisfaction, and the conversation then turned on other subjects. Having asked his opinion of an elaborate treatise by a Scottish professor, which had been highly extolled by an English writer of some distinction, Dr. Mason observed that the book had been sent to him at New York, but he had not read it, for he felt averse from every attempt to establish the abstract doctrines of revelation by reasoning *à priori*, and was persuaded that such sort of metaphysical discussions could yield no real advantage to the truth. Mr. Hall at the same time was of opinion that the writer had not succeeded in his undertaking; that

his reasoning was in many instances obscure and inconclusive, and that in entering upon the doctrine of the trinity he had ventured on a subject far beyond his ability, and probably altogether beyond the reach of the human faculties. The criticisms towards the close of the volume were allowed to be the better part, but that they possessed very little originality, and were not likely to produce any important result.

Amongst other English authors who became the topic of conversation was the late excellent Samuel Drew, whose metaphysical writings, well known in America, were mentioned with high commendation. Mr. Hall however concurred in opinion with Dr. Mason, that they contain some positions that are liable to strong objections, particularly that which affirms the utter impossibility of the annihilation of matter. Of the two principal performances of this able and original writer, that on the Identity of the Resurrection body was considered as by far the best, and which had been reprinted at New York. The critics both agreed that Drew was deficient in perspicuity, though one of the first writers of the age, while in metaphysical acumen he was not fully equal to President Edwards.

Dr. Mason said that the Commentary of a late eccentric but distinguished writer had been reprinted at New York; but it had produced general disappointment, and was therefore discontinued. It was expected that its voluminous contents would



have provided a fund of English catholicism and sound critique ; instead of which it was the most outrageous for party principles of any thing that had of late years been written, and many of its criticisms were evidently feeble and pedantic. The work abounds with extravagant paradoxes, transforming the serpent into an orang outang, making Solomon an apostate and Judas a penitent, with many other such like reveries, to countenance a certain set of dogmas and preconceived opinions, sparing no part of scripture which militates against them. The Commentator possessed considerable information, or as Mr. Hall said, ' he was an ocean of learning ;' but so void of all taste and just discrimination, that his judgment is not to be trusted in any case that in the least interferes with his speculative peculiarities.

When his singular notion of the divine Prescience was mentioned, as consisting only in the faculty of knowing all things, and not in actual foreknowledge, Mr. Hall remarked that if divine foreknowledge be in any degree voluntary, there may then be a portion of ignorance ; and if so, it is impossible to say how much ; it may be partial and temporary, or it may be total and permanent, and God may cease to be what he is, that is, he may cease to be God. The same reasoning will apply to his moral perfections. If absolute and perfect purity be not essential to the divine Being, but that he possesses a capacity of being so if he please ; he may then be unholy if he please, and

that to any possible extent; and then the scriptures are not true, which teach us that it is 'impossible for God to lie,' and that he 'cannot deny himself.' According to this notion, God may falsify his own word if he choose, and may suspend and renounce not only the exercise but the very existence of his own attributes. A doctrine more pregnant with atheism, Mr. Hall conceived, could scarcely be advanced. To maintain it for the sake of saving a point or two in a speculative creed, or to get rid of the doctrine of predestination, or the certainty and necessity arising from absolute and perfect foreknowledge, evinces a hardihood which has seldom been equalled by any other christian writer.\*

A hope being expressed that the present times were favourable to the growth of christian charity, Dr. Mason related an anecdote which afforded much pleasure to Mr. Hall and the rest of the company. The church of Scotland he said had then lately held its general assembly; and as usual at a certain period of the meeting, strangers in the gallery were desired to withdraw. Dr. M'Crie, a celebrated antiburgher, and author of the life of Knox, a work which Mr. Hall greatly admired, was one of the auditors in the gallery. As soon as he heard the notice to withdraw he immediately obeyed; and though invited by several signals to

\* See on this subject a masterly performance by Mr. Gill Timms, entitled, *Remarks on the Foreknowledge of God*, suggested by passages in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary. Published in 1819, price 2s.

continue his sitting, he modestly declined the exception made in his favour. When he had left the assembly, a messenger was dispatched to invite his return; and he no sooner made his re-appearance than they conferred upon him the distinguished honour of seating him by the side of the President.

This triumph of christian charity afforded Mr. Hall an opportunity of introducing the subject of Open Communion. Dr. Mason, previous to his voyage to England, had written an able pamphlet on Catholic Communion, afterwards reprinted in London, and which arose out of peculiar circumstances. Having had occasion to rebuild his chapel at New York, he preached during the interval, part of every sabbath in another presbyterian chapel in the city, belonging to the burgher connection, the doctor himself being an antiburgher, or seceder from the church of Scotland. The intercourse between the two ministers, Dr. Romeyn and Dr. Mason, who alternately occupied the same pulpit, and the mixing together of the respective congregations, gradually produced a happy degree of brotherly affection, justifying the old adage, 'that it is only necessary for good people to converse together every day to make them of one mind.' At length, the brethren at New York, instead of having any longer a party communion, met together at the table of the Lord, and merged their minor differences and nonessentials in the love of Christ and one another.

Dr. Mason's pamphlet, occasioned by these interesting and unexpected circumstances, tended to demonstrate the absolute unity of the christian church, that it is one and indivisible wherever it exists ; maintaining also as an irrefragable truth, " that those who have a right to sacramental communion anywhere, have a right to it everywhere ; and that those who have not a right to it everywhere, have a right to it nowhere." The author had also seen Mr. Hall's treatise on the subject at New York, had perused it with great admiration, and longed to be acquainted with so able an advocate. But to show how partially Dr. Mason had entered into the merits of the question as stated by Mr. Hall, although the leading principle of his own performance virtually embraced the whole subject, it will be necessary only to recite the substance of the conversation that followed. After hearing the history, and the purport of the pamphlet published at New York, Mr. Hall enquired whether he considered baptism as essential to communion ? Dr. Mason demurred, and said he had not fully considered the matter ; he was the advocate of catholic communion, but knew not at present how to dispense with baptism. Mr. Hall urged him to proceed with the enquiry, but he remained silent. Next day at a private interview, and after some free discussion, the doctor acknowledged his entire approbation of the sentiment maintained by Mr. Hall, that personal religion, and not baptism, is the only prerequisite to chris-



tian fellowship. In the new edition of his treatise he also stated, that "all such differences as existed between the baptists and pædobaptists were insufficient to justify the want of communion between those that mutually own and honour each other's christianity."

Mr. Hall made various efforts to provoke a little free discussion, but his learned friend carefully avoided every turn where there was any chance of coming into contact, and quickly diverged into the facetious history of two double-refined sects of Scottish Sandemanians. The controversy between them he said arose out of the very important question whether, when Jesus 'took bread,' in the institution of the sacred supper, he 'took' it up in his hands and *lifted* it from the table, or whether it was only the act of bringing it within reach for the purpose of distribution. The litigants found in the examination of this mighty question what was sufficient to divide their communion, and to form them into distinct and opposite societies, for the purpose, forsooth, of maintaining the purity of christian worship; and so obtained the superlative appellation of Lifters and Antilifters.

Pastoral duties having called away Mr. Hall for about half an hour, those who remained in company were left in the hands of Dr. Mason, who with a giant's strength bore away all the arguments and all the weapons that could be brought against him. He took the opportunity of descanting on

what he considered a radical defect in the constitution and government of the English dissenting churches, in their having no presbytery and no synod to which an appeal could be made in case of heresy and schism, and insisted that it must be a self-evident truth, that the government of the church is solely vested in its pastors and elders.— Mr. Hall unexpectedly returned in the midst of the debate, and quickly called out, “What is that, doctor, what is that?” The doctor declined to answer, withdrew the subject, and studiously avoided every point of controversy. Being told by one of the company, what had been the topic under discussion, Mr. Hall still endeavoured to awaken farther enquiry, by rapidly remarking, “I hope, doctor, we shall never see presbyterianism introduced into any of our churches. I shall do all I can to oppose it.” Here the conversation ended.

At the close of the evening Mr. Hall pressed upon Dr. Mason to engage in family prayer, but he declined it on account of his indifferent state of health, and being already much exhausted. While Mr. Hall was reading a portion of scripture, with his majestic head declined, presenting his expansive forehead and the region above it, Dr. Mason was fixed in admiration, and seemed to feel as if in the presence of all that was grand and dignified in human nature. Mr. Hall engaged in prayer, and as usual, with all that godly simplicity, and those delicate and appropriate allusions to the case of his afflicted friend and the

varied circumstances of all present, for which his social prayers were so eminently distinguished and so much prized.

Next day, when the American stranger had departed, he expressed his great admiration, saying he did not remember to have met with any man, possessing so much practical wisdom, and that he was fitted to take the lead in any department to which his talents might be devoted. Returning from his continental tour, Dr. Mason went fifty miles out of his way on purpose to see Mr. Hall once more, and “once more to shake hands with him,” before he returned to his native country. The interview was very short; they prayed together and parted, never to meet any more on earth. After a very singular affliction, in which he lost the entire use of all his faculties, Dr. Mason died at New York, in the sixtieth year of his age, “justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the western hemisphere.”

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MEMORANDA.—Shortly after the interesting interview above mentioned, Mr. Hall had a very serious attack of his old disorder, and sent for a friend to bear him company. He was in an agony of pain, attended with bilious affection, and great depression of spirits. He feared that his constitution was giving way, and that he should not be long in this world. At intervals he repeatedly said he could think of nothing but his affliction; that it absorbed

all his thoughts ; observing at the same time that very little could be known of a person's religious state by the feelings excited in an hour of distress, and how mistaken we might be in judging by such a rule. He had been afflicted he said from his youth up, and nearly half the time of his existence had been a life of pain. He had been so much accustomed to suffering that an ordinary degree of it did not much affect him ; but that at times it was indescribable and almost insupportable. He believed that in some instances he had felt more agony than some of the martyrs endured in the flames.

During this interview one of his children, then a little girl, stood at his feet weeping, while he was lying on some chairs. As soon as he perceived it he said to her with the most affectionate tenderness, " Do not weep, my little dear ; your father is not going to die yet. The time will come when we must part, but I hope it will not be at present. Probably I shall go first, and leave you behind ; but if you be a dutiful child and love the Lord, and seek him and pray to him, he will be gracious to you, my dear, and we shall meet together in heaven. If you love and fear the Lord, he will take care of you when I am gone : he will bless your mother, and make her a blessing to you. Go, my dear, and pray to the Lord, and walk as in his sight, remembering that he sees you when we do not." In this tender manner he continued his address, and afterwards expressed a hope that the child was already the subject of religious impressions.



Nov. 11th. Mr. Hall is better to day, but very weak and languid. A gentleman who happened to call upon him, cheered his mind with the following remarks. "You remember, sir, that you preached a sermon some little time ago in the neighbourhood of Birmingham. A socinian minister in that quarter was one of your hearers on that occasion. His mind had previously been in a state of suspense on some points of the socinian creed, and your sermon coming in aid of his enquiries, decided him in favour of evangelical truth. Since then he has been preaching the gospel with great boldness, to the surprise and dismay of many of his hearers, who are at a loss to account for so unexpected a change. On the same day in which he heard the sermon alluded to, he dined in company with several ministers of his own connection. One of them observing him to be full of thought, and that he had nothing on his plate, offered him a bone from the dish. This he politely declined, saying very significantly, that he had lived upon bones long enough ; henceforth he desired to be fed with meat, and with that which is meat indeed." Mr. Hall heard this unexpected narrative with peculiar interest, and observed that he never remembered to have preached with greater freedom than at the time referred to. His text was 1 Pet. ii. 6.

## SECTION XVIII.

A. D. 1817.

A melancholy occurrence in the spring of 1817, gave to the sympathies of our benevolent friend a fresh impulse, and to his zeal and intrepidity a new direction, equally honourable to humanity and christian piety. The depressed state of the manufactures, and the impoverished condition of the framework-knitters, induced the latter to combine their efforts for the destruction of some newly-improved machinery, under the mistaken notion of its being inimical to their interests. In the course of four or five years the combination became formidable, under the fictitious name of Ludism, and very extensive depredations were nightly committed on the machinery and other property of their employers, until the neighbourhood of Nottingham and Leicester was filled with terror and dismay.

Half a dozen of these misguided men, who had been concerned in an outrage committed at Loughborough, were brought to trial at Leicester, under a 'special commission,' an extra procedure, which has of late obtained a sufficient degree of notoriety.

The singularity of the case, involving at the same time the liberty if not the life of so many, otherwise peaceable and unoffending individuals, excited in Mr. Hall a strong desire to attend the trial; and conceiving as he did, from all that he saw and heard, that the unfortunate men, all young in years, from about eighteen to thirty, had in this instance been influenced by mistaken views of their own interest, he deeply deplored the apparent eagerness of the special commissioner, by a high-dried construction of the law, to bring them under the terrors of a sanguinary sentence, extinguishing at once all hope of their obtaining better information, or of making any reparation whatever for the injury committed.

In private conversation he dwelt with much feeling on the unjust severity of the criminal code in general, on the necessity of an effectual revision, to render it more accordant with the better feelings and sentiments of the present state of society, and the glaring inexpediency of entrusting to the discretion of a judge the power of life and death, and whether the sentence should be carried into full effect, or undergo a commutation. Thus, he observed, the lives of 'six' human beings depended on 'six' letters (Sus. Col.) which the judge might write on the margin of the calendar to be delivered to the sheriff, as his political prejudices, his inclination, or his subserviency might dictate.

During the few short days that intervened, be-

fore the execution of the sentence, the unhappy men were desirous that Mr. Hall should be allowed to visit them. The respect borne him by the local authorities gave him access, and he readily embraced the opportunity. His solicitude for their spiritual and eternal welfare led him to the prison every day, to be locked up alone with them in the dungeon for a considerable time; and even on the Lord's day, in the intervals of public worship, he hastened from the pulpit to visit the souls that were condemned to die. In their gloomy cell he spent many hours in reading, conversation and prayer; his counsels were listened to with much attention, and gratefully acknowledged by the unhappy men. Without expressing any decided opinion of their religious state, as is too frequently and too confidently done in such cases, there was reason to hope that his kind and assiduous attentions were not altogether in vain. On a closer inspection into their spirit and behaviour, Mr. Hall remarked, that he discovered no signs of malignity, nothing that indicated any unusual degree of depravity, and that in his opinion they were the victims of their own ignorance and misdirected policy.

On the sabbath previous to the execution he preached a sermon suited to the occasion, from 2 Cor. vii. 10, on the nature and necessity of true repentance. Mr. Hall seldom allowed these awful inflictions of the law to pass unnoticed, but generally endeavoured to make them available to moral



and religious purposes. While at Cambridge, in the earlier part of his ministry, a remarkable instance of this kind is related. Two men were apprehended for passing forged notes of the bank of England; one of them, in the act of being taken, seized and swallowed a note to prevent detection. Mr. Hall kindly visited them in prison, and afterwards delivered, it is said, a very impressive discourse from the appropriate words in Job xx. 12—16. ‘Though wickedness be sweet in the mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. He shall suck the poison of asps, the viper’s tongue shall slay him.’

On the day he preached a sermon in reference to the Luddites, a circumstance occurred which disconcerted all his feelings, and unfitted him for his public engagements. Dr. Chalmers, then of Glasgow, was on his way to London, and informed him by letter that he intended on that day to be one of his auditors. Unfortunately the message did not arrive till sabbath morning, within an hour of the commencement of public worship. Mr. Hall had formed so high an estimate of the abilities of his unexpected visitor, that he was actually deterred from entering the pulpit; nobody could persuade him to it, and a member of the church

was obliged to supply his place. Mr. Hall did not recover his tranquility the whole of that day. At the close of the morning service Dr. Chalmers called on him at his own house, not knowing but his absence had been occasioned by ill health. After much hesitation he at length consented to preach in the afternoon, on condition that his reverend friend would deliver an evening lecture. This was agreed to; but from the agitated state of his feelings, Mr. Hall was heard to great disadvantage. This was often the case, on much slighter occasions; the appearance of some distinguished stranger, any thing like prying curiosity, or secular applause, would at any time discompose him; and his loftiest strains of eloquence were seldom heard, but when he emerged from the depths of private devotion to be embosomed among his own people.

In the evening Dr. Chalmers followed up the subject of the afternoon's discourse, with one on the necessity of immediate repentance, which produced a very powerful sensation in the auditory. Mr. Hall heard with rapturous delight, and said afterwards to a friend, "He stops the people's breath sir: they cannot breathe under such a preacher." And certainly, the sermon was one of great merit, though some passages were a little obscured by the Highland pronunciation.

The parties spent the remainder of the evening together at Mr. Hall's. The unnerved preacher now recovered in some degree his elasticity, and

was ready to launch into a wide field of conversation; but nothing of any importance transpired. The visitor who had frightened Mr. Hall from his proprietary now seemed frightened in return; nothing could be elicited, no topic of the smallest interest was brought forward, except that Mr. Hall offered some remarks on various books and authors, to which Dr. Chalmers readily assented, and especially on the absurd attempt of Professor Kidd to reduce the doctrine of the trinity to a metaphysical theory, to be illustrated by the analogies of nature. A cautious reserve was manifest, accompanied perhaps with a silent admiration of the orator who appeared only in dishabille, and had not that day put forth half his strength.

A scots gentleman who accompanied Dr. Chalmers expressed much regret that Mr. Hall had written so little, and offered three hundred pounds for twelve of his sermons in manuscript. This he instantly declined, and said it was quite impossible for him to produce so many that were worth printing. Every accommodation was proposed with regard to time and convenience, and every persuasion used without effect.

One of the company offered to become his amanuensis, if he would dictate a little at his leisure; and suggested how easily it might be accomplished by selecting one of his best discourses every month, and then in twelve months the volume would be ready for revision, without much labour in producing it. He was also reminded that he owed

this labour of love to the rising generation, to posterity, to the interests of eternal truth, and to the temporal welfare of his own family. He was quite sensitive to this appeal, but got rid of it by abruptly saying, he begged that he might be "bored" no longer upon the subject. A still more liberal offer it seems was made for a volume of his sermons after he removed to Bristol, accompanied with the solicitations of his influential friends, but with nearly the same result, though it evidently pained him that he could not accede to their wishes.

The true sequel to this singular aversion to writing for the public, while every thing he sent to press was received with so much applause, is given in one of his letters to a highly respected friend, and is best stated in his own words. "It pains me," he says, "to be condemned and reproached upon a subject which is sometimes a source of more internal uneasiness than is generally supposed. I am far from being satisfied with my own conduct in this particular, but know not how to remedy it. It is not indolence, I can truly say, which prevents me, but a certain fastidiousness and difficulty of being pleased, which really rises to the magnitude of a mental disease. I feel myself in all my performances so short of that standard which I have formed in my own mind, that I can truly say I contemplate my little productions with a kind of horror. If I could dismiss this feeling, I should much oftener try the patience of the public."



Another opportunity presented itself, which he readily embraced, of testifying his reverence for his father's memory. Mrs. Hall, in advanced age, the relict of Mr. Hall of Arnsby, and mother-in-law of our lately deceased friend, died in the spring of this year; and he delivered on this occasion a remarkably appropriate discourse from Deut. xxxiii. 5. 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.' Towards the close he spoke to the following effect. "I shall say but little on the character of the deceased. My dear and honoured father when living, bore testimony to her piety and worth, and she uniformly walked as becomes a christian. She was a retired character, but whenever opportunity offered she made it her business to recommend to others that pillar of truth on which her own hope was inscribed. It was religion, and that alone, that stamped worth upon her life; and it was that alone which enabled her to hope for peace in death. The mercy promised to Israel was equally adapted to her and to all true believers: as is thy day, so shall thy strength be. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

It had long been remarked by persons visiting Leicester, that the people at Harvey Lane had the best preacher and the worst clerk in all christendom; and the time was now come for correcting this glaring incongruity. To the coarse provincialism of the good man who read the hymns, was

added a most inharmonious voice, with a vehemence of utterance that thrilled and grated on every ear ; and often were they compelled to hear him sing out, ‘ Tossed to and fro, his passions fly, from vanite to vanity.’ Mr. Hall however was never disconcerted by the illiteracy of his precentor, whose piety and simplicity made amends for all ; and when an attempt was made to displace him from his eminence, the sympathy of his beloved pastor prevented the indignity, and delayed the attempt at innovation. At length the act of toleration expired ; and at the request of the influential members of the church, leave was given to put an end to ‘ vanite and vanity.’

Nothing could be more amiable, sometimes nothing more amusing, than the manner in which Mr. Hall exercised his forbearance, especially when sterling piety and moral worth could be pleaded as the redeeming quality of intellectual weakness or inadvertence. Anecdotes of this sort are innumerable ; and trivial as they severally appear, they tend to illustrate the dignified simplicity of his character, far more than great achievements, which, though more splendid, possess fewer attractions for the heart. It was the constant accumulation of benevolent sympathies, the incessant overflow of mercy, tenderness and love, that formed the greatest character that ever appeared on earth, and invested incarnate deity itself with the most attractive forms of glory and beauty ; and the distinguishing excellence required of his followers con-

sists in the prominence given to those virtues in which human nature is most deficient, humility, meekness, patience, which form the truest test of moral discipline and christian attainment.

After recovering from one of those paroxysms of pain and sickness, in which his life seemed to be in jeopardy, Mr. Hall delivered a very interesting discourse from Rev. xxi. 4. ‘Neither shall there be any more pain.’ Having considered our natural susceptibility of pain, and the various sources from whence it flows, he enlarged on the utility of this part of the divine economy; observing that it laid the foundation of parental discipline, before reason had established her empire, of juridical law for the protection of society, rendering magistracy a terror to evil doers; was stationed as a sentinel to give warning of approaching danger, directing to the selection of proper food for the nourishment and preservation of life, the monitor of mortality, teaching man his liability to death, the parent of sympathy and benevolence, cherishing a feeling of commiseration for the afflicted and distressed, contributing to the great ends of christian sanctification, by producing greater weanedness from the world, an incapacity for its unsatisfying pleasures and pursuits, and a deepened sense of dependence upon God. But in the life to come this mode of discipline will no longer be necessary; there will be no sin to subdue, no evil to correct, therefore no more pain, but sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Always mindful of casual events, Mr. Hall suffered none of them to pass away without some moral or religious improvement, and found in the commonest incidents some topic of conversation or discourse. Having been invited to dine with a friend, who had provided a plain but very substantial dish, which he relished with more than a common zest; for it was but seldom that he partook of food with any thing like an appetite; he repeatedly noticed to a friend afterwards, the exquisite flavour of the viand, which furnished a singular topic for the lecture on the following evening. His text was Psal. xxii. 26. ‘The meek shall eat and be satisfied.’ After several interesting remarks on the wisdom and goodness of God in opening to us so many sources of pleasure, in adapting food to the palate, and giving a capacity to enjoy it, he considered the immediate end and object of eating to be the gratification it afforded, the sustenance of human life being only remote and subordinate; and from hence deduced the leading theme of the discourse,—that true religion gives a relish for spiritual food, or that it consists in the love of the truth for its own intrinsic excellence, for the exquisite enjoyment and satisfaction it affords, independently of its ultimate results, and that this is one of the principal tests of a true and saving change of heart.

Mr. Hall had long complained of great inconvenience from the number of persons continually



calling upon him, from all parts of the kingdom, scarcely leaving him an hour to himself, so that he was oftentimes obliged to retire to the room of some friend, to prepare his discourses for the pulpit. The first dwelling he occupied on his coming to Leicester was in the immediate vicinity of Harvey Lane, and near to St. Nicholas's church. Wanting a retired walk, amidst a dense population, he frequently rose early on a winter's morning to indulge his solitary musings, in perambulating the neighbouring churchyard, and stumbling over the graves, while the darkness still rested upon the domains of death. A friend having expressed some surprise at so extraordinary a habit, he replied that it afforded him the most solemn satisfaction to meditate frequently on death, to approach the spot where so many human remains were deposited, to dwell on the stupendous effects of a future resurrection, and follow in imagination the present state of departed spirits. In reply to other objections, he said that no preternatural appearance would give him any alarm whatever; that he believed he could sleep with as much composure in a sepulchre as in his own bed, and saw no reason for apprehension. His thoughts were indeed so familiarised with this awfully mysterious subject, that he courted rather than avoided a spiritual visitation; and believed as firmly as ever Milton did, that

‘Myriads of spirits walk the earth unseen,  
Both when we wake, and when we sleep.’

About this time however he left this visionary spot, and retired a little out of town to avoid the perpetual intrusions to which he had been liable. The first winter after his removal he met with a still more disagreeable annoyance, which he encountered with singular courage and fortitude. Some burglars entered his new dwelling in the night, and carried off all the articles in one of the lower rooms. Mr. Hall immediately armed himself with a brace of pistols; and imagining he heard a second attempt another night, he instantly rose, fired from his bedroom window, and afterwards searched the premises throughout. For several evenings following he watched round his dwelling, with fearful notes of preparation, till the robbers were deterred from any farther attempt.

Courage was indeed one of the distinguishing properties of his great mind, and scarcely in any instance was he apprehensive of personal danger. A stranger having come one day from the country to visit a servant of the family, was permitted for awhile to remain in the kitchen, and ordered to depart in the evening, but was clandestinely concealed in the house for suspicious purposes. After the family had retired to rest, some footsteps were heard upon the staircase. Mr. Hall immediately sprang out of bed, seized the man on the top of the stairs, collared and dragged him down, and held him with a giant's grasp, exclaiming all the while, Who are you—where do you come from—what do you do here! Nor did he release his prisoner till he had

placed him in safe custody for the remainder of the night. The stranger having offered some apology, and pleaded for mercy, Mr. Hall set him at liberty in the morning with a severe rebuke, and at the same time dismissed the treacherous servant who had been accessory to his intrusion.

A practice having been introduced into the neighbourhood of Leicester, of teaching sunday-school children to *write*, as well as to read on the sabbath day, his friend, Rev. Edward Morgan, Vicar of Syston,\* solicited Mr. Hall's opinion on the subject. His answer to that gentleman was, that he considered such a practice incompatible with the religious observance of the Lord's day. This opinion having been widely propagated, and meeting with objections in some congregations where the practice prevailed, Mr. Hall was requested to give more at large, the reasons on which his opinion was founded, seeing it was alleged that writing as well as reading might be conducive to that improvement which it was the object of this charitable institution to promote. The following is Mr. Hall's *second* and more enlarged reply, on the

INEXPEDIENCY OF TEACHING TO WRITE IN SUNDAY  
SCHOOLS.

In considering this question, the obligation of a religious observance of the Lord's day must be assumed, as it is a principle not disputed among the

\* Author of *Memoirs of the Rev. T. Charles, of Bala.*

parties whom this discussion concerns. I know not how a religious observance of the Lord's day can be defined, but by saying, It is an exemption of it from every employment not strictly religious, works of the last necessity and mercy excepted. Now *writing*, it is undeniable, is not a religious employment, nor can learning to write be so denominated. It seems therefore to be excluded by the definition we have laid down. It is altogether a *secular* employment, which may occasionally be rendered subservient to the purposes of piety, as may every other attainment; but it partakes not of the nature of religion.

Once break down the barrier between a sacred and civil employment of time, and the sanctity of the sabbath is violated; nor is it possible to know where to stop. A principle is broken in upon which is plain and determinable, nor will it be possible to assign any consistent reason for resisting a second or third encroachment, which will not equally prohibit the first. If the qualifying of persons for civil departments be alleged, other branches of knowledge, arithmetic for example, must be introduced, for there are abundance of situations where the art of computation would not be less useful than that of writing. Thus Sunday schools would become schools of general instruction, and the sanctification of the sabbath be completely lost sight of.

When young persons have been sanctioned by their superiors, in devoting a part of the sabbath to exercises of a purely secular nature; what shall



restrain the more studious part of them, at a subsequent period, from pursuing grammar, geography, or arithmetic on the Lord's day, which are as much connected with religion as the acquisition pleaded for ; and when we recollect the tenacity of early impressions, and the tendency of depraved nature to a progressive deviation from rectitude, these and much greater evils may be expected to ensue.

The relaxation of the rule contended for in the present instance, will naturally destroy in youthful minds a reverence for the sabbath ; and thus one of the elements of impiety will be imbibed in a seminary established for religious instruction. The rules of duty are never successfully inculcated on children, except in an absolute form ; the limitations and occasional exceptions to which they are liable, are best left to be learned by subsequent experience and enquiry. Children are utterly incapable of comprehending nice and subtle distinctions ; and a very refined one indeed is necessary to ascertain the difference in a moral view, betwixt teaching the art of writing and other branches of knowledge.

I am aware of but one objection to which this reasoning is liable. It may be said, that learning to read is no more a part of religion than learning to write. But here lies an important difference. Though reading is not, in itself considered, a part of religion, it is a necessary instrument of religion. The word of God is not accessible without it. It is unquestionably the will of the supreme Being that the sacred oracles should be perused, or they

need not to have been imparted; but they cannot be perused by such as are ignorant of the art of reading; and the ordination of the end is always supposed to include the appointment of what is absolutely necessary to that end. Writing *may be* rendered subservient to the promotion of piety; but it possesses this property only in common with every other acquisition. Reading *is essential* to any considerable acquaintance with the oracles of God. It is the key that unlocks the treasures of inspiration.

All pious persons would be shocked at reading an advertisement from a writingmaster, informing the public that his seminary would be open on the Lord's day. But surely the circumstance of his receiving a pecuniary recompense for his labour, creates no material difference in the two cases. He does that for reward, which the persons I am opposing do gratuitously: but what it is wrong to do under the stimulus of a recompense, cannot become right in consequence of its being done voluntarily and spontaneously. If the action in question be right, it carries its own vindication with it, on both suppositions: if it be wrong, the criminality of it is always supposed to be palliated, rather than aggravated by the strength of the motive. It is sufficient to decide the question with those who suppose the fourth commandment to be still in force, to recollect that God has said, 'Thou shalt remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.'

R. H.

## SECTION XIX.

A. D. 1818.

AVERSE as Mr. Hall had always been from entering ‘the thorny path of religious controversy,’ and much as he loved peace and unity among brethren, he was at length compelled to bear a faithful protest against the sectarian spirit and practice which had so long prevailed in his own denomination,—that of making baptism essential to communion, and repelling of course all pædobaptists as unqualified or unworthy, however conscientious their profession or eminent their piety. His object in publishing his first piece, in 1815, on “Terms of Communion,” was if possible to remove this opprobrium, and to unite in one visible communion all who are vitally united to Christ. It led on however to a controversy, which terminated on his part in the year 1818, except that he afterwards published a summary of the argument in a smaller pamphlet.

The divided state of the christian world, especially of those who are agreed in every thing but baptism, had long been to him a subject of painful reflection, though he had not made it a matter of

dispute, nor of frequent conversation; and could he have been the means of uniting in closer bonds those who are already so nearly allied in christian sentiment and feeling, it would have afforded him the highest satisfaction. The attempt however, itself an innovation on long established usage, met with strenuous opposition from a few pertinacious adherents, to whom the right of prescription is more satisfactory and convincing than 'proofs as strong as holy writ.' To be touched by his eloquent appeals, to be vanquished by the love of truth, there required not merely a competency of mental vision, but a spirit akin to his own, a heart enriched with all the sympathies and all the luxuries of a pious and expansive benevolence. But where the alienated state of christian society, instead of being deeply felt and deplored, is sought to be perpetuated, under the complacent notion of preserving a positive institute in its primitive position, despite of every moral consideration, and in opposition to the very genius of christianity, there could be few feelings in unison with those of the writer, and a very limited capacity for appreciating the full force of his arguments.

There were numerous instances however of a less contracted state of mind, into which the light of truth was permitted to enter; a decided and permanent conviction has been produced in favour of open communion, and is still extending its influence over a large portion of the baptist community, sufficient indeed to leaven the whole lump,



when the few who now hinder shall be taken out of the way. Not only a considerable number of longer standing, and of distinguished ability, but a majority of our junior ministers, whose influence will hereafter be more powerfully felt, have cordially embraced the liberal sentiments advocated by Mr. Hall; and it will scarcely be necessary for another generation to rise up, before the rust of prejudice be sufficiently worn off, to leave room for the operation of reason, and the exercise of free enquiry upon the subject. A current has already set in, which will at no distant period sweep away the narrow and contracted system which has too long prevailed.

The cause of strict communion has evidently derived its chief support from the authority of a few great names, which had they been withdrawn it must have sunk under its own weight; neither the talents nor the influence of its present advocates could yield it any adequate support. The most conspicuous defender in modern times was the venerable Abraham Booth, and for many years his 'Apology' became the text book of the whole party. When however he came to encounter the difficulty arising from the evident inconsistency of holding communion with pædobaptists in every religious duty, save that of the Lord's supper, of treating them as heathens *in* the church and as christians *out* of it, his distress and embarrassment were sufficiently manifest. "The sturdy saint perfectly reels and staggers under its insupportable

weight, which like a millstone round the neck of strict communion will inevitably sink it into perdition; an incongruity which the most obtuse understanding perceives, and no degree of acumen can defend; and which so totally annuls the plea of original precedent, which is their sheet anchor, as to leave it doubtful whether its advocates are most at variance with the apostles or with themselves."

And though the suffrage of Mr. Fuller has been pleaded in favour of the exclusive system, it is well known to the author of these sheets, that this same difficulty met him in all its force, a difficulty which he was never able to solve to his own satisfaction. In frequent conversations on the subject he used to say, pædobaptism was not merely a speculative error, it was a practical one, and therefore should not be countenanced. And when reminded that consistency would require the withdrawalment of *all* fellowship, to which no one could feel more repugnant than himself, he betrayed considerable embarrassment, and would merely reply, that the commemorative rite was *in* the church, and moral duties *out* of it. "What mysterious place then is this church, which possesses the property of darkening every object enclosed within its limits, and of rendering christians invisible and impalpable to each other? In the broad daylight of the world, notwithstanding their minor differences, they are recognised with facility; but the moment we enter the sombrous gloom of a

baptist church, we are lost from each other's view ; and like those who visited the cave of Triphonius, return pale, dejected and bewildered."

Had Mr. Fuller applied his masculine understanding to a full investigation of the subject, he would no doubt have thrown considerable light upon it ; but he was too much engaged in other controversies, and in his labours for the mission, to allow him the necessary means of going into it. All therefore that he attempted, and that only a short time before his death, was to prepare a brief statement of his opinion, to be afterwards published, if judged expedient. The pamphlet however was little more than the enlargement of a few thoughts which he had written in 1776, in the twenty second year of his age, the original of which is still extant, and which is unquestionably the feeblest of all his productions, scarcely worthy of the name it bears. At the same time it must be admitted to contain his sincere convictions on the subject, down to the latest period of his life ; but in the absence of all profound enquiry, of all patient investigation, and before the whole of the subject was brought under discussion, this posthumous publication can be regarded as possessing very little authority. The manly mind of Mr. Fuller was not wedded to preconceived opinions, like some of his pretended admirers ; he who had broken through a host of hypercalvinistic prejudices, and had afterwards the magnanimity of conceding some points to his opponent, in the heat of

the arminian controversy, would have found no difficulty in doing equal honour to the irrefragable arguments of his eloquent and illustrious friend.

The fundamental principle maintained by Mr. Hall is,—that no church has a right to establish terms of communion which are not terms of salvation, a principle so obvious as to be nearly self-evident. The practice of strict communion, he observed, derives no support from the supposed priority of baptism to the Lord's supper in the order of institution, a position which Mr. Fuller and others had vainly attempted to support; and that it is not countenanced by the tenour of the apostolic commission; nor by apostolic precedent, the spirit of which is in favour of an opposite proceeding. On the contrary, christian communion, in contradistinction to baptismal communion, is enforced by the obligations of christian charity, and is comprehended in the precept which enjoins forbearance towards mistaken brethren. Its opposite rests on no general principle, applicable to other cases; it attempts to establish an impossible medium, inflicts a punishment which is capricious and unjust, and by fomenting prejudice and precluding the most effectual means of conviction it defeats its own purpose.

In illustration of the doctrine of forbearance, a most touching instance is given in the conduct of our blessed Lord, such as the heart of no true believer will be able to resist, unless he has surrounded himself with a prejudice which nothing



but a miracle can penetrate. "A tender consideration of human imperfection," says this amiable writer, "is not merely the dictate of revelation, but the law of nature, exemplified in the most striking manner in the conduct of Him whom we all profess to follow. How wide the interval which separated *his* religious knowledge and attainments from that of his disciples! He the fountain of illumination, they encompassed with infirmities. But did he recede from them on that account? No, he drew the bond of union closer, imparted successive streams of effulgence, till he incorporated his spirit with theirs, and elevated them into a nearer resemblance to himself. In imitating in our conduct towards our mistaken brethren this great exemplar, we cannot err. By walking together with them as far as we are agreed, our agreement will extend, our differences lessen, and love, which rejoices in the truth, will gradually open our hearts to higher and nobler inspirations."

The utter incongruity of exclusive communion with Christ's example, with all his doctrines and precepts, is repeatedly exhibited in all its enormity, with an evidence that glares and flashes in the very face of the reader. The strict communionists, it is observed, are the only persons in the world of whom we have either heard or read, who contend for the exclusion of genuine christians from the Lord's table; the only persons who ever attempted to distinguish them into two classes,—such as are entitled to commemorate their Saviour's

death, and such as are precluded from that privilege. In what page of the voluminous records of the church is such a distinction to be traced ; or what intimations shall we find in scripture of an intention to create such an invidious disparity among the members of the same body. Did it ever enter the conception of any besides, that a right to the sign could be separated from the thing signified ; or that there could be a description of persons interested in all the blessings of the christian covenant, yet not entitled to partake of its sacraments and seals.

“ Nothing more abhorrent from the principles and maxims of the sacred oracles can be imagined, than the idea of a plurality of true churches, neither in actual communion with each other, nor in a capacity for such communion. This schism in the mystical body of Christ is by far the greatest calamity that has befallen the christian interest, and one of the most fatal effects of the great apostasy foretold by the sacred penmen ; yet we have been so long familiarised to it as scarcely to be sensible of its enormity, nor does it excite surprise or concern in any degree proportioned to what would be felt by one who had contemplated the church in the first ages. To see christian societies regarding each other with the jealousies of rival empires, each aiming to raise itself on the ruins of all others, making extravagant boasts of superior purity, generally in exact proportion to their departures from it, and scarcely deigning

to acknowledge the possibility of obtaining salvation out of their pale, is the odious and disgusting spectacle which modern christianity presents. The bond of charity, which unites the genuine followers of Christ, in distinction from the world, is dissolved, and the very terms by which it was wont to be denoted exclusively employed to express a predilection for a sect. The evils which result from this state of division are incalculable. It supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective, it hardens the conscience of the irreligious, weakens the hands of the good, impedes the efficacy of prayer, and is probably the principal obstruction to that ample effusion of the Spirit which is essential to the renovation of the world."

It was an exclamation of one of the ejected ministers, during the persecuting reign of Charles ii. "What has Satan done! What is become of the communion of saints? Those who could formerly *suffer* together, cannot now *sit* together at their Father's table. This is a lamentation, and shall be written for a lamentation." The advocates of exclusive communion go even farther than this, they attempt to justify and defend what will be regarded with sorrow and grief by all future generations; and whatever be their feelings and intentions, the system itself aspires to the audacity of *unchurching* every pædobaptist society in existence, and laying the whole christian world under an interdict. It proposes to punish good men for the involuntary neglect of one ordinance, by compelling

them to abandon the other ; and because they are uneasy at seeing them perform only half their duty, would oblige them if possible to omit the whole. Popery is the intolerance of power, this of weakness ; the principle of both is the same.

It is alleged however in their defence, that baptism has been made a prerequisite to communion in ancient as well as in modern times ; that they plead for no more than is admitted by nearly all denominations throughout christendom. This is their main support, and the opposite practice is to be regarded as a modern innovation. They therefore ask with some confidence, how does it come to pass that a sentiment in which all parties have been so long agreed, should now be found erroneous ?

To this plausible objection Mr. Hall replies, that it comes with an ill grace from those who upon a subject of much greater moment have presumed to relinquish the precedent, and arraign the practice of the whole christian world : and after setting an example of revolt, it is too late for them to inculcate the duty of submission. And as to the prevalence of the general practice, in making baptism necessary to communion, it may be accounted for from its not having been made a subject of enquiry ; no circumstances having occurred to render such a discussion necessary, till the conduct of the strict communionists had called it forth. Baptism having been considered at a very early period as essential to salvation, it became of course



essential to admission into the christian church ; and from hence may be dated the origin of a practice which has continued to the present day.

The descent of the human mind from the spirit to the letter, from what is vital and intellectual to what is ritual and external in religion, is the true source of idolatry and superstition in all the multifarious forms they have assumed ; and as it began early to corrupt the religion of nature, or more properly of patriarchal tradition, so it soon obscured the lustre and destroyed the simplicity of the christian institute. In proportion as genuine devotion declined, the love of pomp and ceremony increased ; the few simple rites of christianity were extolled beyond all reasonable bounds ; new ones were invented, to which mysterious meanings were attached, till the religion of the new testament became in process of time as insupportable a yoke as the mosaic law. From an erroneous interpretation of the figurative language of a few passages of scripture, in which the sign is identified with the thing signified, very similar to the mistake which afterwards led to transubstantiation, it was universally supposed that baptism was invariably accompanied with a supernatural effect, which totally changed the state and character of the candidate, and constituted him a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. There is scarcely a writer in the three first centuries who has not spoken on this subject in a manner which the advocates for strict communion would deem

unscriptural and improper, scarce one, from whom we should not be taught to infer, that baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation. This doctrine pervades the formularies of the church of England, the Lutheran church, and nearly all other established churches in christendom. No wonder therefore that those who make baptism essential to salvation should consider it essential to communion. It is much more a matter of surprise that strict baptists should urge as an example, a practice which had its origin in a principle which they themselves would by no means allow. Nor is it any wonder that infant baptism should have been grafted on the same principle."

In opposition to the assumption of the opponent party, that mixed communion is a 'modern' practice, it is demonstrable that it must have prevailed in the church from the time that infant baptism was introduced. "In order to comprehend," says Mr. Hall, "the true state of the question respecting the practice of christian antiquity, it may be convenient to distribute it into three periods. The first including the time during which correct sentiments on the subject of baptism universally prevailed: the second, that in which a gradual transition was made from the practice of adult to that of infant baptism: the third, the period in which the latter obtained a general and almost undisputed ascendancy."

"On the first of these periods little need be said. Where there are no dissimilar elements there

can be no mixture, and therefore to affirm that the practice we are contending for was unknown in the earliest ages of the christian church, is little more than an identical proposition. While no demur or dispute subsisted respecting either the form or the application of the baptismal rite, a punctual compliance with it was expected and enforced by the presidents of christian societies, for precisely the same reason which suggested a similar mode of proceeding to the apostles. It was a part of the will of Christ, in the interpretation of which no division of opinions subsisted among the faithful.

“ The next period is that during which an innovation was gradually introduced, by extending the ceremony in question to infants ; a period which from the commencement of the third to the close of the fourth, probably comprehended the space of two centuries. Supposing the modern practice [of infant baptism] to have been first introduced towards the end of the second or beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is distinctly noticed by Tertullian, the first writer who explicitly mentions it ; we cannot imagine a shorter space was requisite to procure it that complete establishment and ascendancy, which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval there must have been some who still adhered to the primitive practice, and others who favoured and adopted the more recent innovation. In other words, there must have been baptists and paedobaptists contemporary with each

other. What then became of that portion of the ancient church, which refused to adopt the baptism of infants? Did they separate from their brethren, in order to form distinct and exclusive societies? Of this not the faintest trace or vestige is to be found in ecclesiastical history; and the supposition is completely confuted by the concurrent testimony of ancient writers to the universal incorporation of orthodox christians into one grand community. Our opponents are therefore reduced to the necessity of acknowledging that mixed communion was unanimously approved and practised at least for two centuries, a communion in which baptists and pædobaptists united in the same societies, unless they mean to affirm that there were no baptists during that period.

“When we descend to the third period, we are presented with a new scene. After the commencement of the fourth century, down to the era of the reformation, the baptism of infants was firmly established, and prevailed to such an extent that few traces of the ordinance in its primitive state are to be discerned. Many of the Waldenses however are judged, with great appearance of evidence, to have held opinions on that subject coincident with those by which we as a denomination are distinguished. By their persecutors of the romish community they were usually stigmatised and reproached for holding the anabaptist heresy, while it appears on the contrary that there were not wanting among them some who practised the bap-



tism of infants. These opposite statements, exhibited with equal confidence, on this obscure branch of ecclesiastical history, are best reconciled and accounted for by supposing them divided in their sentiments on that particular. No indication however is discoverable of a rupture in external communion having occurred on that account; and from the acknowledged difficulty of ascertaining the separate existence of baptist societies during the middle ages, and until the period of the reformation, the necessary inference is, either that there were none during that interval who adhered to the primitive institute, or as is far more probable, that they were mingled and incorporated with persons of another persuasion.

“Hence it is manifest that the concurrent testimonies of the fathers of the three or four first centuries in proof of the necessity of baptism to church fellowship are urged to no purpose whatever, unless it could be shown that there was no mixed communion, no association of the advocates of adult with the patrons of pædobaptism known in those ages, a supposition that is at direct variance with facts. Nor is it at all difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for that combination of testimonies, which the writings of the fathers supply, in favour of the essential connection of the two ordinances. The scanty writings which remain of the authors of the second century, afford no decisive indication of the existence of infant baptism in the period in which they flourished; and during

the third, the few authors whose works have descended to us appear, with the exception of Tertullian, to have imbibed the pædobaptist persuasion. It was natural for the first class of these fathers, who lived at a time when no doubt or dispute had arisen on the subject, to insist on a compliance with that ordinance: nor was it possible for the second, who extended baptism to infants, and considered it as the indispensable means of regeneration, to pursue another course. That there was a mixture of these different persuasions in society together appears unquestionable; the practice therefore, stigmatised as 'modern,' existed as early as a difference of opinion arose upon the subject."

In opposition to the overwhelming mass of evidence from scripture and antiquity, in favour of christian communion, as contradistinguished from party communion, the strict baptists put in requisition nearly all the talent they could muster, and published several pamphlets, to no other purpose than that of securing to themselves a more signal defeat. No additional light was thrown upon the subject, no comprehension of mind exhibited; a few glimmerings, like those of a half-moon, with a large segment shrouded in darkness, was the only spectacle presented to the public eye. The sum of all their labours amounted to little more than an incessant din of affirmations, more than twice confuted, and still repeated with a pertinacity as deaf and insatiate as the grave. An infatuated bigotry seized on some, who in their

frenzy had the presumption to insinuate that our departed friend, an honour to human nature and the ornament of the denomination to which he belonged, was forsooth, for the castigation they had received, an "enemy" to the baptists. The unworthy insinuation however did not conceal, it tended only to expose the anguish felt, on being vanquished in presence of their adherents, who being emancipated from their trammels, enjoyed the defeat of their partisan and shared in the triumphs of truth. Others, unable to wield a single argument, or to comprehend any thing beyond their own dogmata, sanctioned by the wisdom of a few forefathers, indulged in coarse invective, and descended to comparisons which could reflect no disgrace on any but themselves. When noticing the insinuations and inuendos of one of these opponents, Mr. Hall could not help saying, that he was "like a certain animal in the eastern part of the world, who is reported to be extremely fond of climbing a tree for that purpose,—he merely pelts the author with his own produce."

The intelligent and disinterested part of the religious public will feel themselves under many obligations for those fruitless efforts which unintentionally gave occasion for the exercise of those stupendous powers which in all probability had otherwise lain dormant, and for the production of a volume of polemic theology fully equal if not superior to any other work of the same author. Instead however of being in an element congenial

to the amplitude and grandeur of his mind, he had just reason to complain that he had to encounter a set of miserable logomachies; that his was merely "a coasting voyage, in which he felt himself necessitated to creep along the shore, and to comply with all its irregularities, in the midst of flats and shoals, and exposed to perpetual annoyance from the innumerable small craft which infest these shallow waters." The opposition only in part served to rouse his energies, they did no more; the force opposed to him was not sufficient to put them on the stretch, or to call forth half the strength of his vigorous intellect. The whole controversy viewed collectively, as one of the critics observed, bore a striking resemblance to Nebuchadnezzar's image, having a head of gold, a body of brass, and feet of miry clay.

Regrets were expressed by some of the author's friends, that he had not engaged in a subject of wider extent and deeper interest; but however much the paucity of his literary productions may be regretted, no one can reasonably complain of the part he took in the present controversy, which from his hands is now invested with an interest unknown before. Independently of the question at issue there is a luminous train of thought, irradiating a variety of subjects incidentally connected with it, touching every point of personal and social religion, of christian charity and forbearance, and almost every part of the discursive system of morals. In the course of the investigation there



are no postulate assumptions, no dogmatisms, no evasion of difficulties; the argument is laid bare, principles are reduced to their first elements, and exhibited in 'all their native force and grandeur. While the writer is laying under contribution the resources of theological and moral evidence, the immense stores of his own research, and conducting a train of analogical reasoning to its legitimate result, the judgment is borne away by an irresistible torrent, and the heart awed and melted by the most sublime and touching pathos. The relief to the mind is unspeakable, when after dogging through the cold and crabbed, the trite and tedious pages of his principal opponent, lengthened out by endless see-saws and repetitions, where not a single new idea is found, nor one glowing impression felt, we turn to this enlightened and seraphic writer, who conducts us out of the dense november fog, where all is dark and damp and chilly, and gladdens us once more with a sight of the orb of day, diffusing a genial heat, and shedding an effulgent brightness on all around us.

Seldom has controversy been known to cherish devout affections, it is too generally found by its barren speculations and tone of asperity to produce an opposite effect; not so however in the present instance. There is throughout an urbanity and gracefulness of manner peculiar to the writer, mixed certainly with some pleasantries and occasional sarcasms, to give to the discussion a little vivacity and animation; but there is no rancour or

bitterness, nothing to sully the sacredness of religious truth ; everywhere a calm unruffled feeling prevails, purified from the grosser passions, and sublimated into the most exalted piety. That man is not surely to be envied who can sit down to such a repast without deriving some spiritual benefit, or retire from the perusal without some fervent aspirations after that holy benevolence and brotherly affection which it was the great object of the author to cherish and excite. His personal tranquillity and gentleness of spirit, at the time of engaging in this controversy is well remembered ; and his anxiety to do ample justice to the statements of his opponent induced him to read his pamphlet "four times over," before he entered on his reply, and to prevent all possible misconception.

If it belonged to "a Pascal, and to a few others of the same order of genius, to invest the severest logic with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and to render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance," it will readily be conceded that our revered friend has shown himself fully equal to the undertaking. His pieces on christian communion afford one of the finest specimens of polemic divinity anywhere to be found in the english language, and will descend to posterity with well merited applause. Already has this work been introduced into some dissenting colleges as the model of sound reasoning and classical elegance, and may be read with advantage by theological students of every description.

Nor has it escaped the notice of literary men on the western continent, some of whom have expressed themselves in the highest terms of admiration, not only of this, but of the other writings of Mr. Hall, while they had but a very imperfect acquaintance with his religious character, and have committed some slight inaccuracies in their critiques.

THE FOLLOWING STRICTURES APPEARED IN THE NEW-YORK OBSERVER, WRITTEN BY REV. DR. SPRAGUE.

I could wish for myself, and for my countrymen generally, says this American writer, that there prevailed with us a greater knowledge of that most excellent man, who for these last twenty years has been the boast of christianity and the pride of learning—the Rev. ROBERT HALL. We regret that his writings are not more numerous; and that whatever intelligence we have, touching in any way his character, is indefinite and unsatisfying. By his very catholic piety however, and by his great preeminence as a moral writer, he has made himself generally known to the christian world. True benevolence has long since discovered enough of the man, to attempt an emulation of his peculiar virtues, and with very tolerable success. The first thing that attracts our attention in Mr. Hall's discourses is, the appearance of so great a mind, so perfectly balanced, and so wisely directed. It moves on, resolute and unbroken, like the firm phalanx of a conquering army: his powers of thought and imagination are under the most

veteran discipline, and all animated with a zeal and a boldness which nothing but a holy warfare can inspire. His mind, I believe, has not been analysed by the critics; its organization is too perfect to invite such labour, but it may safely be affirmed that *strength* is its predominant quality, and that it is most decidedly of a philosophic cast. It seems at first to be formed in the same mould with that of the modern Scotch; and one might be led naturally enough to enquire, whether he was not educated among them. Then again, on examining his writings a little farther, he seems to betray that true English grace, that imperiousness of manner, nowhere else to be found, except in a genuine Englishman, deeply learned at his own university.

The fact however determines, that this Englishman was indeed from King's College in Aberdeen; and it is hazarding nothing to affirm, that the great excellencies of the two nations are in him most happily united; the highest passion for philosophy, but with all the decorum of law; the speculations of learning, with the majesty of common sense; and I know but of one man besides, in whom this united character, to the same extent, is likely to be found. I mean that very accomplished man, DUGALD STEWART. To him, I am ready to insist, that Mr. Hall bears a greater literary resemblance than to any other man, north or south of the Tweed. The former has the advantage, no doubt, in philosophical learning, and in his writings there is found some of the fine sentimental; but the



latter discovers a reach of thought, and a vehemence of expression, of which Mr. Stewart has not shown himself capable.

Their resemblance to each other is in that happiest manner in the world, of conceiving and setting forth every object which they touch, and with that unerring judgment which is never guilty of a fault. In their style and manner of writing, they are certainly not very unlike. Mr. Hall, in the use of the English language, though he is a little latinized, has shown himself a great master, and evinced a very uncommon familiarity with the best classics, ancient and modern. In his diction he is rather exuberant; so much so, that he has been compared with Burke. But it ought to be with this difference, that *his* language never breaks away from his thoughts. In truth, he is as much inferior to Burke and other Irishmen, in their undulations and fascinations of language, as he is superior to them in all correct reasoning. His charms do not arise from his poetry and moral painting; and I am persuaded that a constant reader of him must have a considerable ability and fondness for abstraction.

No one can doubt his vast superiority, in correctness of taste and reverence for standard, to some of the lawless Scotchmen; and for this pride of artificial correctness the critics like him the better, but the world will act out their good pleasure by liking him the less. It may be seen that Mr. Hall, in the works which he has published,

has taxed his nobler powers, such as his subjects seem most peculiarly to demand. Every subject of which he treats is greatly elevated by his lofty imagination, and each position is supported by an overwhelming accumulation of evidence, splendid as the sun, and firm as creation ; but he has not thought it important to give a very charming zest to his discourses by pressing into service all the sensibilities of his nature.

But it is of more importance that we notice Mr. Hall in his sacred profession. His Sermons, as might be inferred, if what I have said be true, are very perfect in plan. The author could see the end from the beginning, and he believed as firmly as the poet, that "order is heaven's first law." Divisions with him are few and simple, scarcely marked at all numerically ; and the numbering of heads beforehand he has fully discountenanced, both by practice and precept. He forms his schemes, in the discourses with which I am acquainted, on what is called the topical method, as on such subjects it is most natural he should. In whatever pertains to writing, he is to be suspected of consulting Cicero\* much more than he does the Bishops. His language is that of the statesman and philosopher, and on them he has formed himself. Though a theologian of the first order, he has nothing of their technicalities. As to the na-

\* This shrewd suspicion is not without some foundation. Mr. Hall was a great admirer of Cicero, and has been heard to say that he seldom prepared any thing for the press, without first giving the Roman orator a fresh reading.

ture of proof which this great man brings to his subjects, we see him always full of philosophy and the nature of things ; but he makes a free use of history, and a wise use of scripture. “ The world indeed is all before him.”

In obedience to truth we must acknowledge, that there appears in his printed discourses, not quite so much regard to the heart as to the head ;\* or in other words, he is chargeable with following too closely the fashion of his countrymen, whose character it is to lecture, rather than to preach. But against this most benevolent man's religion, I hope not to insinuate. The piety or common orthodoxy of Robert Hall, I trust will never be called in question. There is in him most manifestly, a very devout spirit, a constant and humble reliance on God for mercy, for his presence and support. He has a zeal in defence of truth, not less fervent surely, than that of his brethren of any persuasion ; yet the mantle of his charity is as broad as the earth. Considering his connection and circumstances, such an entire freedom from bigotry is next to a miracle. Now it cannot be otherwise but that the brethren of the same honourable community with himself, should be very dear to him, especially those brave compeers in the ministry, the Fullers and the Fosters, who have so long

\* This remark could not with any manner of justice be applied to his Pulpit discourses, which were highly pathetic as well as argumentative, making the most powerful appeals to the conscience and the heart. His Printed sermons were generally on public occasions, which neither required nor admitted the same mode of address. ED.

fought by his side ; but to these he gives not the least preference. Being himself a baptist, and of baptist descent, he has shown that he was never born for that sect, nor for any other sect.

.....He sympathises with the clergy of the Establishment in all their sorrows, and feels the sympathy of a brother ; he pronounces long eulogies on the sacred merits of their departed brethren, and praises their forms with the zeal of a catholic. And in all this he is not ambitious of a return of their favour ; for at the same time he cheers every dissenter that he meets with, and bids him God speed. He preaches at the ordination of the Independents, and protects by his arm all that unprotected multitude, both from diocesan jealousies and from political power. By every party he is equally esteemed, and it should not be matter of surprise, that he receives his full measure of applause from the Establishment. It is virtuous applause, and only because he deserves it : for it is no praise and no paradox to say of Mr. Hall, that he is the greatest Bishop in England. *His* diocese is limited only by christendom.

But it is *that spirit* of christian harmony which has gone forth, building up institutions, the union associations, the national societies throughout Europe and America—*that spirit* must testify of this man at some future day. His existence is yet to be viewed as scarcely less important than that of Luther himself. Hall was raised up for a special purpose as well as he, and that purpose is no less



than to make of one hue all the party-coloured garments of the christian world ; and under God, he has already done much of this work. He has taught others how to do more ; and we rejoice to see other great men walking close in his footsteps, and having power over the same unclean spirits. Mr. Hall has the honour of being older than Chalmers ; and for about twenty six years has he been the chieftain at war, a leader of the catholic band of heaven-taught soldiery. When the history of religion shall make a record of their achievements, it shall be told of this man that he had the power of an exorcist ; that he cast out the demon of discord, that he united all factious disciples ; that he was indeed a hero of one of the most noted revolutions in time.

The springs of political government have also felt the touch of his unobtrusive but mighty hand. There is not perhaps a man living, permit me to say, of whom the English politicians stand so much in awe, as of Robert Hall. He explains to them the British constitution, points them to the path of duty, arraigns them before the tribunal of the public, sifts all their proceedings, and dares even to speak against Mr. Pitt ! All this however, as every act of this man, is in strictest subserviency to that one great cause of virtue and of heaven. But alas, he is verging to the grave : and shall the spirit of christian harmony die with him ? No, it shall not : it shall be cherished, and we will cherish it for ever.

## SECTION XX.

A. D. 1818, 1819.

TOWARDS the close of 1817 Mr. Hall delivered his celebrated sermon on the decease of the Princess Charlotte, and its appearance in print was followed with general applause. The critics all agreed in considering it as “a philosophical and eloquent developement of the causes which make the sorrows of those who are encircled by the brightest appearances peculiarly affecting, and as giving an exquisite picture of the gentle victim, adorned with sacrificial glories.” Such was the eagerness of all classes to get a sight of this performance, that before any subsequent impressions could be issued, three times its selling price was offered for several copies. Yet when the author was informed that the early impressions were not equal to the urgency of the demand, he expressed much surprise, and imputed it to the extraordinary nature of the occasion, the flatteries of reviewers, and the assiduity of the booksellers. While the sixth and seventh editions were preparing, he was quite sure it would be overdone; yet the circulation continued till it had exhausted nearly twenty editions.

The court and the royal family could not fail to have heard of this splendid sermon, which had circulated among all the higher orders, but did not deign to notice it or its incomparable author, though it offered a sympathy so exalted and refined, that the loftiest monarch that ever sat upon a throne might have thought himself honoured by such a tribute. But it was the court of George iv., and the wonder ceases.

When a court chaplain formerly made only a striking quotation in one of his discourses in the royal chapel, George iii. immediately enquired for the author; and being informed that the passage was taken from a small work published by Dr. Fawcett, pastor of the baptist church at Hebden Bridge, the king ordered the book to be sent to him. Having perused it, he desired his approbation to be communicated to the worthy author, with an intimation that he should be happy to show him some token of royal favour, at any convenient opportunity. A few years elapsed when an unfortunate man, the son of one of Dr. Fawcett's hearers, was sentenced to be executed for the crime of forgery, and the venerable pastor implored the interposition of royal mercy. The king, faithful to his word, and doing honour to the disinterested benevolence of the applicant, spared the life of the offender at his request. Since then it seems, the boasted march of intellect has been a little retrograde, and virtuous feeling less cherished in the palaces of kings.

Soon after the publication of the sermon, on the irreparable loss of the Princess Charlotte, the author's friends solicited a uniform edition of all his printed sermons, to which he reluctantly consented. When the volume appeared, the reviewers, as well as the reading public, sat down to the feast; the former gave a bill of fare, the latter needed no incentive, and both were gratified.

One of the periodical reviewers very properly observed, that Mr. Hall's excellence "did not consist in the predominance of any one of his powers, but in the exquisite proportion and harmony of the whole. The richness, variety and extent of his knowledge, are not so remarkable as his absolute mastery over it. He moves about in the loftiest sphere of contemplation, as though he were 'native, and endowed to its element.' He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they were those that came first to his mind, and which formed his natural dialect. There is not the least appearance of his straining after greatness, in his most magnificent excursions, but he rises to the loftiest heights with the most childlike ease. His style is one of the simplest and clearest, the least encumbered with its own beauty, of any which has ever been written. It is bright and lucid as a mirror, and its most highly wrought and sparkling embellishments are like ornaments of crystal, which even in their brilliant inequalities of surface, give back to the eye pieces of true imagery set before them."



“The works of this great preacher,” continues the reviewer, “are in the highest sense of the term imaginative, as distinguished, not only from the didactic, but from the fanciful. He possesses ‘the vision and faculty divine,’ in as high a degree as any of our writers in prose. His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty, and ‘clothe upon’ abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest would not convey the same meaning in so few words as he has done, in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when like his, of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal..... There is no rhetorical flourish, no mere pomp of words, in his most eloquent discourses. With vast excursive power indeed, he can range through all the pagan world; and seizing those traits of beauty which they derived from primeval revelation, restore them to the system of truth. But he is even best when intensest, when he unveils the mighty foundations of the rock of ages, or makes the hearts of his hearers vibrate with a strange joy, which they will recognise in more exalted stages of their being.”

Mr. Hall, says another critic, on reviewing this volume of sermons, “is a surprising writer. Few men combine so many excellencies. He has a most enlarged and cultivated understanding, possesses a command of language which enables him to employ the whole vocabulary at pleasure, and

his words are so fitly chosen that they are ‘like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’ His memory is stored with classic and scientific lore, which in the most elegant yet unassuming way is consecrated to the service of the cross. His imagination resembles the well-watered garden, where fruits and flowers spring up in abundance, but all are in the nicest order, and every tree and plant occupies its proper place. His reasoning powers are those of a mental giant, and carry a mighty conviction along with them. He can be simple or sublime, pathetic or terrible, didactic or argumentative at pleasure, just as his subject requires. When he discusses a topic, his mind, like a vast machine, gradually acquires a velocity, which not only calls every power of his own soul into action, but has an irresistible influence upon more remote objects, and touches all the springs of feeling and of action in the bosoms of his hearers or readers. Before the impetuosity of his eloquence in the pulpit, and his rhetoric from the press, the heart is fairly led captive, and the thoughts are hurried along with him by a rapid stream. When he defends the truth, it is not easy for an adversary to penetrate his shield: when he attacks error, his strokes are tremendous. The deist startles at the blow, the socinian is confounded, the antinomian slinks away with shame.

“It is difficult to point out his best works, for all are excellent. Like a wise man he has not glutted the public with his productions. One oc-

tavo volume contains the cream of the labours of thirty years. Hence there is no sameness between his writings, except the general resemblance which marks the offspring of the same parent. As a pious and useful production, his sermon at the ordination of Mr. Roberts is chef d'oeuvre. No young minister especially should be without it. It is a fine display of the more noble parts of the author's mind. His sermon for the princess Charlotte was a proof of what he was capable of doing instantaneously; it discovers some most surprising touches of eloquence, and a grasp of mind seldom equalled."

The same writer proceeds to say, "we trust it will not be deemed odious, if we venture here to compare him with another great luminary. It is by comparisons of this nature that we discover superior excellencies, and we do not blot out one star from the shining circle by looking at it by the side of another. Certainly, Dr. Chalmers, to whom we allude, proved on this occasion that he had not the ready pen of our author. He has however had less practice, and when a few more years shall have rolled over his head, will doubtless have attained nearer to the desirable acquirement. At present our English divine has a considerable superiority. One of Chalmers's own countrymen, in a manuscript which now lies before us, thus finely points out the contrast."

'Chalmers and Hall cannot be compared; they may be contrasted. Chalmers seeks after figures, Hall avoids them. Chalmers loads his subject with

points and ornaments, Hall endeavours to represent it fairly. Chalmers would rather throw an arch, than allow you to walk over a level surface. Hall would take a circuit to avoid an ascent ; but when he does throw an arch, it is over rocks and precipices, so tremendous that you know not whether most to admire, the awful scene around you, or the amasing power and skill that admit you to view, and safely conduct you over it. Chalmers's manner is violent, unnatural, and rather repulsive ; Hall's unaffected, graceful, inviting ; and when he rises to animation, altogether irresistible.'

"This character," adds the reviewer, "we know to be impartially drawn, from circumstances connected with the writing of it, and it certainly must be acknowledged that it is correct. But though Hall and Chalmers may thus be contrasted, it is not designed to underrate the great merits of the northern luminary, but only to show how 'one star differeth from another star in glory.'"

Notwithstanding this high and well-deserved eulogium, it is an ascertained fact that the northern critics themselves considered a friend of Mr. Hall's as possessing a mind of a still higher order ; and that though he was far inferior in the graces of oratory, and the mellifluous style of his writings, his thoughts descend to a greater depth of research, and dissect with anatomical precision all the parts of moral science, till every fibre is laid bare. His Preface to Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, without referring to his other works, has been mentioned



in confirmation of this opinion, and is undoubtedly one of the profoundest dissertations ever produced by mortal man. There is after all a difference between these two great writers that offers no disparity to our deceased friend ; if the author of the *Essays* be more minute and microscopic, and descends deeper into the elements of thought, his soarings are not so lofty, nor his combinations so grand and magnificent. The one explored and analysed the ore, the other was lord of the soil, and filled the throne of English literature. But it is still more to be admired, that these prodigies of intellect were alike consecrated to the doctrine of the cross, and the interests of piety and virtue.

Mr. Hall was not in the habit of preaching funeral sermons, except on particular occasions ; but about this time a member of his church died in one of the almshouses at Leicester, at the extraordinary age of a hundred and seven, when he selected for the motto of his discourse the appropriate words in Acts xxi. 16. ‘An old disciple.’ Few sabbaths passed without the presence of some strangers from a distance ; and it happened on this occasion that an unknown gentleman came on purpose to spend a sabbath at Harvey Lane, and afterwards wrote to his correspondent in the following terms.

“I have heard Robert Hall twice, the one discourse three quarters, the other fully an hour.

The forenoon discourse, the language was expressive and elegant, but free from figures. It was a plain and practical exposition of Rom. xii. 11. 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' In the afternoon it was a funeral oration, the subject of it was an obscure old woman. Here the splendour of his poetical imagination burst forth, and he poured out such a torrent of eloquence on the head of indigent worth, as delighted all who could hear and understand him. The chapel was full, but not crowded, and the preacher was extremely animated. I thank you," adds the writer to his friend, "for sending me thirty miles on foot out of my way to hear him."

Early in 1818 the author of these memoirs, having some time before prepared for publication eight small volumes of Mr. Beddome's Sermons, was permitted to arrange and publish a volume of his Hymns, selected from the manuscripts in possession of the family, and readily obtained from Mr. Hall *the following recommendatory preface*, expressly written for the purpose—

"Far be it from me to indulge the presumptuous idea of adding to the merited reputation of Mr. BEDDOME, by my feeble suffrage. But having had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with that eminent man, and cherished a high esteem for his memory, I am induced to comply the more cheerfully with the wishes of the Editor, by prefixing a few words to the present publication.

Mr. Beddome was on many accounts an extraordinary person. His mind was cast in an original mould ; his conceptions on every subject were eminently his own ; and where the stamina of his thoughts were the same as other men's (as must often be the case with the most original thinkers) a peculiarity marked the mode of their exhibition. Favoured with the advantages of a learned education, he continued to the last to cultivate an acquaintance with the best writers of antiquity, to which he was much indebted for the chaste, terse and nervous diction, which distinguished his compositions both in prose and verse. Though he spent the principal part of a long life in a village retirement, he was eminent for his colloquial powers, in which he displayed the urbanity of the gentleman, and the erudition of the scholar, combined with a more copious vein of attic salt than any person it has been my lot to know.

As a Preacher he was universally admired for the piety and unction of his sentiments, the felicity of his arrangement, and the purity, force and simplicity of his language ; all which were recommended by a delivery perfectly natural and graceful. His printed discourses, taken from the manuscripts which he left behind him at his decease, are fair specimens of his usual performances in the pulpit. They are eminent for the qualities already mentioned ; and their merits, which the modesty of the Author concealed from himself, have justly been appreciated by the religious public.

As a religious Poet, his excellence has long been known and acknowledged in dissenting congregations, in consequence of several admirable compositions, inserted in some popular compilations. This however is the first time the public have been presented with a Volume of Devotional Poetry of his own production.

The variety of subjects treated of, the poetical beauty and elevation of some, the simple pathos of others, and the piety and justness of thought which pervade all the compositions in the succeeding volume, will we trust be deemed a valuable accession to the treasures of sacred poetry, equally adapted to the closet and to the sanctuary. The man of taste will be gratified with the beautiful and original turns of thought which many of them exhibit, while the experimental christian will often perceive the most secret movements of his soul strikingly delineated, and sentiments portrayed which will find their echo in every heart.

Considerable pains have been taken to arrange the Hymns in such a manner as is best adapted to selection, from a persuasion, which we trust the event will justify, that they will be found the properest Supplement to Dr. Watts that has yet appeared.

R. HALL."

At another time, in conversation with a friend, he made the following remarks on Mr. Beddome's Sermons, after having read through a volume during a restless night, and being asked his opinion of



them. "They are very evangelical, he said, and there is a good choice of subjects; there is bone and sinew and marrow in them, which shows a great mind. I like them because they are so full of thought; they furnish matter for the mind to dwell upon. It is true they are very short; but it must be remembered that they are posthumous, and were never intended for publication; they are little more than skeletons. I like them the better for their compactness." Being told that they had not had a very extensive circulation, he replied, "It shows the taste of the age, sir: they would have been more approved, had they been long and verbose and showy. They supply materials for thinking; but some persons do not like to think, sir. In short I do not know any sermons of the kind equal to them in the English language. I believe they are destined to be much more extensively read and appreciated."

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The following notes were journalised in the autumn of 1818; and may serve as a specimen of the general tenour of Mr. Hall's life and labours, of his ardour and devotedness, as long as health and strength permitted; and as has already been observed, properly to appreciate his character it was necessary to see him at home, where all his best sympathies were in daily exercise.

Oct. 4th. After preaching two animated discourses from John xvii. 24, and administering the

Lord's supper both morning and afternoon, to the lesser and larger societies under his care, he went immediately to visit several afflicted friends, and returned home towards evening much exhausted. After tea he retired as usual to his study ; he then appeared in his family with great benignity, and entered into religious conversation with much familiarity and tenderness. The morning discourse, on the doctrine of election, having been adverted to, Mr. Hall remarked, that on the arminian hypothesis, God did not actually choose any to eternal life ; but all who are saved make choice of him, and are saved in consequence of such a choice ; so that the destiny of eternal life originates in themselves, and not in God. As years increased he said, he felt a growing conviction of the truth and importance of the calvinistic system, and found in it a rich source of consolation.

Before supper the family were assembled for evening worship. One of the company being requested, made a few remarks on a passage of scripture, which were listened to with devout attention by this humbleminded man, and accompanied with many sighs of heartfelt approbation. Scarcely any thing pleased him more than the religious exercises of others, every way inferior to his own, while in them he found but little satisfaction.

Oct. 10th. Saturday evening, when he might be supposed to have been shut up in his study he called upon his friend and said he had been requested to preach a funeral sermon on the mor-

row, and not being able to satisfy himself with the views he had taken of the subject he came for a little conversation, hoping that something interesting might be elicited. It was impossible not to make some effort to meet such singular condescension ; a few hints were therefore suggested, on the assurance that a little only would be necessary to put his ample resources into requisition. He was pleased to say that the conversation had relieved him of much anxiety, though the stimulus it afforded could only be like that of a humble artist who occasionally brushes away a little dust, which for a moment had impeded the movements of some powerful machine. A practice moreover had long prevailed in that quarter, encouraged by the senior Mr. Hall of Arnsby and the late Mr. Fuller, of ministers enquiring one of another on the most profitable way of discussing certain subjects, and making the composition of a sermon a frequent theme of conversation. And though Mr. Hall certainly did not need any subsidiary aid, he countenanced a practice which it would be well to see continued and encouraged, especially among junior ministers, who are too often found deficient in their pulpit preparations, on which so much of their acceptance and usefulness depends.

During the week a collision took place among some of the neighbouring clergy, which engaged Mr. Hall's attention. Bishop Tomline, well known for his antipathy to calvinism, had annoyed the vicar of St. Martin's by appointing an arminian

clergyman to preach a controversial sermon at one of his visitations at Leicester ; and to encrease the pungency of this proceeding, the vicar was condemned to hear an elaborate refutation of his creed from his own pulpit. This provoked an angry controversy, in which the vicar greatly failed in his temper, and descended to bitter invectives and egregious personalities. Intimate as Mr. Hall had been with the pious vicar of St. Mary's, he had but little acquaintance with the vicar of St. Martin's, not finding in him that congeniality which is the foundation of genuine friendship. In the course of conversation he remarked, that he could by no means approve of Mr. Vaughan's defence ; there was in it a sort of rancorous sarcasm, and of lordly insolence, which christianity forbids, and the sentiments he advocated were Augustinian rather than Calvinistic. Observing the virulence of this dispute, and the continual opposition of two parties in the church, Mr. Hall concluded there must some time or other be a large secession from the establishment, as it would be impossible for such hostilities to be long endured within the pale of the same community.

He afterwards animadverted pretty severely on the conduct of a dissenting minister, who was said to have neglected the pastoral duties in not visiting and conversing with his flock. How absurd he said it was, for a minister to preach all the sabbath day on subjects which he did not think it worth his while to mention in the course of the



week ; how much such a ministry appeared to be merely official, and how injurious to its success. Such men might be very decent lecturers, but were scarcely entitled to be considered as pastors of a christian church.

Oct. 11th. Mr. Hall preached twice to day, visited the sick, and attended the prayer meeting in the evening. At the tea table, allusion having been made to the character of Christ, he remarked that it was perfectly unique, and unlike to all others. Amongst good men there is generally some prominent or distinguishing quality, accompanied by some proportionate defect. Adverting to two well-known ministers deceased, he remarked that they were both eminent for piety, but eminent in a different way. The religion of the one was the religion of justice and righteousness, of stern and inflexible integrity ; that of the other was the religion of love, of the most expansive benevolence. The religion of the latter was perfectly contagious, communicating itself to all who came in contact, and filling the mind with serenity and delight. That of the former inspired veneration and awe, and repelled rather than attracted the beholder. One was John the Baptist, the other was John the Beloved. In our blessed Lord no one virtue was more prominent than the rest, and this it is that constitutes the perfection of moral beauty. In him there is an assemblage of all the graces in their highest perfection : ‘ he is altogether lovely.’

A friend observed in conversation, that there appeared to be no very important difference between the doctrine of divine foreknowledge and that of divine decree, for though one implied certainty and the other necessity, yet that a hypothetical necessity attached to both, and therefore no advantage was gained by the denial of decree, while divine foreknowledge was fully admitted. Isaiah foretold the birth of Cyrus by name, a hundred and fifty years before the event: if the prophecy was true, the birth of Cyrus was absolutely certain: but in order to establish the truth of the prediction it was necessary that he should be born at the given time. Prophecy therefore necessitated the event, as well as foresaw the certainty of its occurrence.

To this Mr. Hall replied, that prophecy, or revealed foreknowledge, implied no more than certainty, and might be communicated in prospect of an event which would certainly transpire, whether it had been predicted and foreknown or not; but that decree determined the existence of the event, which might or might not have existed in the ordinary course of things. Decree made that certain and necessary which was otherwise contingent, seeing there could be no need to decree or predetermine the existence of what was certain to come to pass. Yet he observed, in defending the Calvinistic hypothesis, it was too common to overlook or evade this distinction. If the Calvinist is stating the origin or efficient cause of all good, he

resolves it into divine decree, making that certain which would otherwise have had no existence; but if told that then, consequently, all moral evil must be referred to the same cause, he then denies that decree implies necessity, and that the thing would have come to pass, whether it had been decreed or not. Mr. Hall concluded therefore, that as nothing perfectly satisfactory can be advanced on the subject of divine decree, beyond that of its actual existence, it demanded the utmost latitude of forbearance among real christians. He preferred the Calvinistic construction on the whole, though it was by no means free from difficulty.

The subject of communion with God being mentioned to him, as a mysterious and wonderful privilege, he remarked that it could no otherwise be accounted for or enjoyed, than by the special agency and influence of the Holy Spirit; that no speculative belief could possibly produce it; that it was the effect only of that faith which an old divine had called, "a sense of God in the heart." The office of the christian ministry, he said, could not be faithfully and truly exercised without much communion with God; that no man could preach well who did not pray over his sermons, and have his mind deeply imbued with the sentiments he wished to deliver; and that men who were immersed in secular concerns had better not meddle with the work of the ministry.

Mr. Hall is well acquainted with the general

principles of law and government, and has lately been reading with intense interest some of the writings of Jeremy Bentham, particularly his treatise on *Morals and Legislation*, published in French by Dumont of Geneva. After examining it he said, that the productions of no other author had given him such an exalted conception of the powers of the human mind, and that he should scarcely have thought it possible for any man to have produced such a disquisition, if he had not actually seen it. He could not doubt, he said, but the writings of this extraordinary man would in time give law to the whole civilised world; that they would hereafter be quoted in the senate as a higher authority than Grotius, Montesquieu, Puffendorf, or Locke, or any other writer on jurisprudence and general legislation. His positions are incapable of refutation, and only require a capacity to comprehend them.

Oct. 28th. This evening Mr. Hall appeared evidently to be labouring under difficulty and discouragement, arising from some unpleasant circumstances in the church and congregation. He discovered that two or three officious individuals were acting under wrong impressions, to the injury of those upon whom they were desirous of inflicting public censure. It did not escape his observation, that all the evils and inconveniences attending ecclesiastical discipline were not confined to one form of church government; the congregational order, with all its advantages, had also its difficul-



ties; and that while power is dangerous in the hands of a few, wisdom is seldom found with the multitude. He saw that some were attempting to carry measures with a high hand, and he dreaded a collision. Far from wishing directly to interpose his own authority, he at the same time could not allow the least appearance of injustice, or that any thing should be done by partiality. Deeply did he lament the indulgence of evil tempers, and the effects of unfounded prejudices; and remarked, how often it happened that divisions and disputes among christians were a mere strife about words, inconsiderately spoken, where criminal intention could not fairly be imputed, and where nothing really injurious had been done, while much of the evil might be avoided by only preserving a becoming silence.

Perfectly unassuming, and not calculating on his own influence in society, he became distressed by the apprehension of a schism, and his inability to prevent it. He was alarmed at the ascendancy of one or two forward men, scarcely worthy to unloose his shoe-latchet, and seemed relieved by the declaration of a friend, that the ardent attachment of the people and their confidence in his discretion would fully guarantee the measures he might see it necessary to propose. Perpetually inaccessible to every thing like commendation, which no one indeed presumed to offer, he seemed astonished to hear of the strong hold he had on the affections of the people, and their readiness to manifest a becoming deference to his judgment

in whatever related to their social order and prosperity.

This conversation elicited a fact which few would be prepared to admit, who are not well acquainted with the true ingredients of his character; and reference must frequently be had to his unaffected modesty and diffidence to account for many circumstances which otherwise might appear inexplicable. A mind like his, perpetually conversant with ideas of perfection, by which he hourly measured his own attainments, acquired a settled habit of humility, which imparted to his deportment something of the submissiveness and docility of childhood, or at least a manner totally unlike the arrogant self-importance of mediocrity. In the present instance he was so dismayed at the appearance of an insignificant faction as to imagine that if defeated in his prospective measures, he must not only resign his charge, but that no other congregation would afterwards invite or accept his services!

The unhallowed feelings displayed by some on this occasion led him to remark, how little of the spirit and genius of the gospel is exemplified in the temper and conduct even of good men; how often the stern and unyielding principle of a spurious integrity absorbs the better feelings of the heart, and becomes the succedaneum for what is amiable and ornamental in christianity. Integrity and truth, he allowed, were the foundation of all that is virtuous, no real goodness can exist

without them ; but they are the foundation only, the broad basis on which the other graces are to be erected ; but if no superstructure be raised upon it, there will be little to distinguish the religion of a christian from that of a mere heathen, and he will be little better than a “sanctified savage.” It is the skeleton only, without the lineaments, without the animated image of the saint.

He farther observed, that good men are often unconscious of those evils which are apparent to all around them, and which lie concealed under the garb of some imposing virtue, ostentatious in its appearance and easily acquiring repute. Hence if a man of strong prejudices spies some fault in another, his conscience and his religion come in aid of his prejudices, to fulfil an imaginary act of justice, even where the virtues of humanity and of christian piety have been immolated. The fault, which in itself was only venial, is magnified into an enormity which calls for vindictive terrors ; and where imprudence or inadvertence only existed, occasion is taken to suspect the most inveterate depravity.

The case which elicited these remarks was one of private slander ; and though Mr. Hall was unwilling to encounter and expose the offending party and their adherents, the collision became inevitable, and he calmly waited the result. In social converse he gave the utmost latitude to his feelings, and utterance to all he thought ; but on serious and important occasions he comported

himself with the utmost decorum and circumspection, spoke but little, and was remarkably select in his expressions. He called the disputants and their witnesses before him, and presided with the wisdom and gravity of a judge. The result was most satisfactory. The petulance of office met with proper rebuke, the innocent were acquitted, the guilty condemned, the peace of the church restored, and the honour, impartiality and integrity of the justly admired pastor rendered if possible still more illustrious.

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An anonymous pamphlet was circulated at Leicester in 1819, under the title of 'An Appeal, on the subject of the Framework-knitter's fund,' and was so cautiously conducted that the real author was for a considerable time unknown. Enquiries were made of all the booksellers, but none of them could tell who wrote it. The style, a little reduced, probably for the purpose of disguise, still retained so much of its identity as to create a suspicion that it must have proceeded from the pen of Mr. Hall; but when appealed to by several of his friends nothing was disclosed, from which any certain inference could be drawn, and the writer remained unknown for several years. The reason for suppressing his name is stated in the preface to be, "that while it might possibly create prejudice in some quarters, the writer was not aware that it would bestow additional weight in any."



The stocking makers at Leicester and in the neighbourhood, during a great depression of their wages, had endeavoured to raise a small fund for their mutual relief when out of employ, to which some voluntary contributions were added by a few opulent individuals. The design of the pamphlet was to encourage a more liberal subscription to the fund, not only from individuals, but from the adjacent parishes where the manufacture was carried on; from a consideration not only of the relief it would afford the suffering workmen, but its tendency to lighten the poor rates, and benefit other parts of the community.

In pleading the cause of the oppressed the benevolent writer does not forget to state, that there are higher and more affecting considerations connected with the subject, than what relate merely to the relief of the destitute and distressed. "If the evil which we now have the means of escaping should return, it will be in vain to flatter ourselves with a long duration of tranquility; a starving must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burden. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigour of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the

people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsistence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry, will take an unnatural and destructive direction."

In a letter to one of his correspondents about this time he remarked, that Leicester and the neighbourhood was "a scene of misery, on account of the severe depression of the local manufacture. Such is the mass of hopeless misery everywhere presenting itself to view, that it is next to impossible for a mind of any sensibility to be cheerful. Surely never was a country, which has not experienced some public convulsion, so completely ruined as ours. Happy will it be, if the dismal prospects around make us sigh for a better country."

To no species of error did Mr. Hall feel a stronger aversion than to that of antinomianism, which has appeared under the guise of orthodoxy, and a pretended zeal for the doctrines of grace; and a friend having written a work in 1819, exposing the absurdity and impiety of the system, he at the author's request prepared a preface, which may properly be considered as a treatise on the subject, though it only professes to be introductory to a more effective performance.

The writer entertained but little hope of any good to be effected by these labours, the bitterness of spirit cherished by the abettors of antinomianism, and their indisposition to attend to any thing

like argument, being such as to render every attempt abortive. "Whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt or hatred of the most devout and enlightened christians, out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient pharisees ever more notorious for 'trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others.' Could they be prevailed upon to engage in serious dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation; but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions than the light of evidence." This system he considered as the epidemic, the wide-spreading malady of the present day, an evil of gigantic size and deadly malignity; and from the observation he had made on the obstinacy and fierceness of individual characters, he used to say that a real antinomian was a compound of the ass and the tiger.

In the hope however of guarding others from falling a prey to this seductive heresy, he traces some of the steps by which it has gained such a fearful ascendancy, and finds it to have originated in hypercalvinism, with which indeed it is chiefly

identified. "The absurd notion of unconditional promises, severing the assurance of salvation from all the fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness." The practice also of confounding the secret purposes of God with his revealed promises, has greatly contributed to this delusion. "That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life," says Mr. Hall, "is a doctrine which appears to me to be clearly revealed; but if any person infers from hence that he is of that number, he advances a proposition without the slightest colour of evidence. An assurance of salvation can in no instance be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects, or in that renewal of the heart which is essential to eternal life."

As subordinate to the heresy in question, and as having undesignedly prepared the way for its fruition, the writer very justly notices the prevalence of a technical phraseology, indicative of orthodoxy, which has by its perpetual recurrence narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obsolete various modes of expression in which the sacred writers freely indulge. The habit of unduly magnifying the importance of particular sentiments, not merely implying their truth, but identifying them with the fundamental articles of faith, when they are only the modifications of a particular party, has also had a very injurious effect. The



practice of dwelling almost exclusively on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of moral duties, and omitting pungent and awakening appeals to the conscience, have contributed to the production of a system as much opposed to the grace as it is to the authority of Christ.

“The most effectual antidote to the leaven of antinomianism, will probably be found in an accurate delineation of the christian temper, in a specific and minute exposition of the personal and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming motives, which revelation abundantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, under pretense of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alterative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed, without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief, it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for reestablishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature.”

Near the close of the year Mr. Hall attended the funeral of another of his brethren in the ministry, the excellent Mr. Freeston, pastor of the baptist

church at Hinckley, of whose eminent piety and the means of its attainment he speaks in the following terms, in a preface which accompanies the memoirs of his life. "His attention," says Mr. Hall, "was forcibly drawn to the writings of the puritan divines, who, with all their imperfections of style and method, are unquestionably the safest of all uninspired guides. The masculine sense, the profound learning, the rich and unequalled unction of these fathers of the modern church, exerted a powerful influence on his mind, and greatly contributed to form and mature his character. It was his constant practice to devote a considerable portion of each day to their perusal; and to this, under God, he was undoubtedly indebted for that habitual spirituality which so remarkably distinguished him, and in which very few whom I have had the happiness of knowing appeared to equal, none to surpass him. His sense of the divine presence, his relish for devout meditation and intercourse, his advertence to the great realities of a future life, seemed scarcely ever to forsake him; and the least that can be affirmed is, that he 'walked with God.'"

A letter which Mr. Hall wrote to a friend on this occasion, is in unison with the sentiments above expressed—

*Leicester, Dec. 2nd 1819.*

My dear Sir,

Mr. Freeston is gone, and is interred! I preached his funeral sermon on Thursday se'nnight,

on the evening of his interment, from Matt. xxv. 21. ‘ Well done, good and faithful servant.’ A prodigious concourse of people attended : he was most highly and universally respected, and has left us a great example. It gave me pleasure to find that nothing was said about printing the sermon, and I believe it was not much admired.

I am truly concerned that you have determined on so long an absence ; there are many in Leicestershire and its vicinity who highly respect you, and from whom you may be assured of a most cordial welcome. I miss your society *very* much ; to spend a few hours with you during these long winter evenings, and chat over a variety of subjects, would afford me the highest gratification.

You have expressed a wish to know my opinion on our national prospects. I think them most fearful, and am impressed with the apprehension of some public convulsion. The obstinacy of one party, and the rancorous discontent of the other, will I fear, bring matters to an open rupture : but there is a rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Our friend Mrs. B. has been brought near the grave, but blessed be God, she is fast recovering. Good Mr. S. is gone ; he died extremely happy. I have sprained my ancle, so as to be obliged to ride to meeting ; but through mercy it is better. Mrs. H. joins in affectionate remembrance to you, and all your family.

I am, dear sir, your affectionate brother,

R. HALL.

## SECTION XXI.

A. D. 1820, 1821.

IN April 1820, Mr. Hall delivered a most impressive discourse on behalf of the baptist mission, from Isai. ix. 7. 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.' Considering the text in its connection as referring to the encrease of the Messiah's kingdom, he noticed some of the principal events which should presede and accompany it; such as the total abolition of heathen idolatry, the overthrow of popish and mahomedan superstition, the triumph of truth over the depraved passions of mankind, and the complete subjugation of the world to the authority of Christ. That this object is of sufficient magnitude to awaken the zeal and call for the interposition of the supreme Being; for though infinitely removed from all human passions, it would reflect upon his character infinite dishonour to imagine he could be indifferent to the moral state of the world, or could view the progress of virtue otherwise than with complacency, and of vice without unutterable abhorrence. If the feelings of good men are strongly excited by these objects, what sentiments must



fill the eternal mind, the origin and fountain of all purity and perfection, on beholding the ascendancy and prevalence of these opposite principles. There is that in sin, in idolatry and superstition, in the daring usurpation and denial of his authority, which is sufficient to arouse the jealousy of the Lord of hosts, and inflame his zeal for its destruction. 'He will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images; the idols he will utterly abolish.'

The preacher proceeded with great animation to observe, that a warfare was going on between the powers of darkness and the principles of truth; that one of the principal theatres of this contest are the plains of Hindostan, where the grossest forms of idolatry have presented a brazen front, countenanced and supported by English infidelity; and thither therefore must be sent the soldiers of the cross. The zeal of the Lord of hosts demands our cordial, our ardent cooperation; he has given us his word, and we must send it to the heathen; he has qualified and raised up a number of missionaries, and we must send them forth to proclaim his salvation to the ends of the earth. Turn your shining dust into bibles, give it in aid of the missionary cause, and thus exchange your earthly treasures for heavenly and eternal riches.

Viewing the great and leading events of the day, not merely as a patriot, but as a christian philosopher, and the bearing they had on the general in-

terests of religion, Mr. Hall delivered soon afterwards a sermon on 'the signs of the times,' which at a later period was remodeled and adapted to subserve the interests of a public charity. This discourse had in it nothing speculative or predictive; its principal design was to direct attention to the great movements of the moral machinery of the world, as tending to produce a powerful effect on our devotional habits and feelings, and guiding us to the performance of specific duties, which are to be regulated and modified by the varied aspect of providence.

Among the prominent features of the times he said, one of the most remarkable was the encreased mental activity everywhere apparent; never was the human mind so excursive, nor the progress of science so general and so rapid at any former period. The advantages of knowledge were appreciated by all classes to a large extent, the moral condition of society had engaged very general attention, had excited a number of true philanthropists to impart instruction to the poor, to attempt the melioration of the criminal code, and the improvement of prison discipline, with a view of giving to moral principles a greater ascendancy in the system of jurisprudence, and a wider sphere of operation. Another remarkable circumstance of the times was, an encreased effort for the propagation of the gospel. Fifty years ago scarcely more than one missionary institution was heard of, and that was the Moravian; now almost every

denomination of christians has its missionaries, and the gospel is spreading among all nations. The sacred scriptures have also obtained encreased attention, and are more than ever regarded as the only standard of faith and practice; this cannot fail to render religious and missionary zeal both safe and salutary. Truth has commenced its triumphs even among the catholics; and in spite of the restrictions and fulminations of Rome, several of that communion have been actively employed in distributing the word of life. Another distinguishing feature of the present age, and certainly one of the most amiable and inviting is, a greater tendency to union among all real christians than at any former period in modern history; they begin to feel that they are nearly allied to each other, the children of one Father, having one common interest to promote. Nor ought it to be overlooked that the present times are distinguished for a more than ordinary attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty, the grand ally of christianity, and the constant attendant on its triumphs. Religious liberty can never exist in the bosom of despotism; it is the pure offspring of civil freedom and liberal principles, which ought therefore to be sedulously cherished in every virtuous mind.

In the spring of 1821 Mr. Hall appeared more healthy than for a long time before, and was more than usually energetic in his public labours; indeed he thought himself in a better state of health than at almost any former period of his life. An

apprehension that the church under his care did not sustain its accustomed prosperity, and the appearance of some unsanctified tempers, gave him much uneasiness, but added a fresh stimulus to his exertions; the lukewarmness which he thought he saw around him had no other effect upon him but to quicken his vigilance, to encrease the fervour of his zeal and spirituality, and the pungency of his pulpit addresses. He dwelt much on the danger of impenitence and final perdition; and frequently, so powerful were his appeals that, had there been any efficiency in merely human means, it would have seemed impossible that an unawakened sinner should have remained in the congregation. The unusual pathos and bursts of feeling which at this time pervaded his discourses seemed to some of his friends portentous of a speedy departure, or of a dissolution of his connection with the people, his ministry having in it so much of the character of a message from the unseen world.

Early in March he attended the funeral of his esteemed and lamented friend, Mr. Toller of Kettering, and delivered a discourse which deeply affected a numerous audience, who testified by their tears the love they bore to the memory of their deceased pastor, in whose character "religion seldom presented more of the lovely and attractive. If it did not inflame him with the zeal which distinguished more active and enterprising spirits," said Mr. Hall, "it melted him into love, clothed



him with humility, and decked him in an eminent degree with the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit." He afterwards wrote a brief memoir of his amiable friend, in which he gave a most admirable delineation of the varied excellencies which distinguished his character, and that of Mr. Fuller's, both of whom were long resident in the same town, and lived in the greatest harmony.

Only a few days after this bereavement, Mr. Hall delivered a funeral oration at the interment of one of the ministers at Leicester, with whom he had had an occasional acquaintance, and was much struck with the unparalleled grief manifested on this occasion, such as he had never witnessed in any other instance. Independently of other considerations, he attributed it chiefly to the habits of friendship and kindly intercourse which had previously existed between the pastor and the flock, and took occasion from hence to remark on the very high importance of a minister's cultivating an acquaintance with his people, as the surest way of engaging their affections and of promoting his own usefulness.

The anonymous pamphlet which Mr. Hall had so considerably written nearly two years before, to encourage a Relief Society on behalf of the distressed stockingmakers in his own vicinity, met with three violent opponents, who on different grounds urged its inutility, or that the proposed mode of relief by voluntary contributions would be impracticable. Grieved to see the sympathy

he had poured into the cup of public misery treated with wantonness by inconsiderate and intemperate men, whose motives were liable to the strongest suspicions, he in 1821 condescended to reply to their objections, more for the sake of the suffering workmen than for any respect to which the assailants were entitled; and in this anonymous pamphlet he fully established the positions of his former publication. Having exposed the palpable contradictions of the principal opponent, whose political notoriety is known to every one, Mr. Hall gives in few words a true description of his character. The reader he says will be satisfied that "he is a popular declaimer, not a philosopher; a firebrand, not a luminary. He emits fire and smoke in abundance, like a volcano, but the whole effect is to desolate, not to enlighten. His principal artifice consists in the exhibition of a few specious and bold generalities, which he illustrates and confirms by a few prominent facts, culled for his purpose, without the slightest attempt at that patient induction and enquiry which alone lead to solid and useful results. Shrewd, intemperate, presumptuous, careless of the truth of his representations, and indifferent to their consequences, provided they make an impression, he is well qualified, it must be confessed, by his faults no less than his talents, by his inflammatory style and incendiary spirit, for the office he assumes, to scatter delusion, to excite insurrection, the Polyphemus of the mob, the one-eyed monarch of the blind."

In the course of this year a new catholic chapel was opened at Leicester, with great pomp and parade, which attracted very general attention. This induced Mr. Hall to deliver in his own place soon afterwards, two elaborate discourses on the pretensions of modern catholicity, which were heard with great satisfaction by a crowded auditory, including several of the resident clergy. He was strongly urged to print these discourses, and a hope was entertained of his compliance; nothing however resulted but an unfinished sketch, which has had a posthumous publication.

It has already been intimated, (§ vi.) that in 1821 Mr. Hall published a new edition of his *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*, to protect himself from the unfounded suspicions which the adverse party had insinuated, and also to prevent the clandestine sale of the work, which had been secretly encouraged. He found in fact that the public would not be denied the pleasure of a perusal, and was therefore compelled to make a fresh issue of the publication, which was eagerly bought up as soon as it made its reappearance. A writer in a high-church periodical, connected with the East India Company, immediately sounded the alarm, and deprecated the interference of a christian minister in the science of politics. With the view of rendering these strictures more annoying, they were soon copied into a Leicester newspaper, to be circulated among the friends of the author of the *Apology*. Mr. Hall in the first in-

stance replied through the same medium; his animadversions were afterwards printed in a separate pamphlet, and nearly six editions were demanded in the course of a month. Neither the *Christian Guardian*, nor their satellite, will easily forget the effects of their temerity, in attempting to beard the lion in his den.

Yet such a spirit of infatuation has seized on these writers, that they still repeat their oft refuted calumnies, and go on traducing the character of their opponents. Even the *Christian Observer*, forgetting its usual decorum, and the strong claims it had on the attention of the religious public, has latterly descended to class itself with the bigoted and illiberal; has indulged in bitter invectives on dissenters generally, and endeavoured to cast a shade over Mr. Hall's character, on the ground of his political opinions. Yet who amongst all the serious dissenters does not revere and honour the memory of such men as Jeremy Taylor and Joseph Hall, and a host of other pious prelates, notwithstanding their adherence to a despotic government, and their zealous defence of episcopacy. And why is it that piety itself has no charms, unless it be decked with the meretricious ornaments of a worldly establishment? The present times, as much or more than any other, call aloud for the union and cooperation of all the real friends of christianity; and surely the high-church party have chosen a very inappropriate period for venting their obloquy upon dissenters, and vaunting about the excellence



of their own church, a time when that church is coming under the correcting rod of the legislature, and is confessing her sins by the mouth of so many of her penitent seceding ministers.

That Mr. Hall was the uniform and unflinching advocate of a popular government, throughout the whole of life, is undeniably certain; though the superfluous assertion, that he wrote his *Apolo-gy* "at the age of twenty eight," would seem to insinuate that it was a premature performance, which had not the sanction of his maturer years. Yet who can forget that at the age of fifty seven he republished the same work, without retracting a single sentiment, and with the assurance that few things would have given him more uneasiness than to have it imagined he could ever become hostile or indifferent to the cause of civil and religious liberty. What some men have designedly desecrated under the notion of mere politics, was in his esteem an important branch of public morals, not undeserving the serious attention of the most religious persons, involving in a high degree the interests and the happiness of the human race. Lamenting as he did, the royal conspiracy against the inalienable rights of man, he was often heard to say that Waterloo had been the grave of European liberty, and that the results of that memorable battle had put back the clock of the world six degrees. He expected indeed, ever afterwards, that some great revulsion would eventually repair the losses of that period; and only

within sixteen days of his decease, in the last letter he ever wrote, he said that "a great crisis seemed approaching, which would probably shake Europe to its centre, and produce an entire new order of things."

A gentleman, who has given his name in the public papers, vouches for the truth of the following statement. "In January 1831 a public meeting was held in Bristol, to petition for reform in parliament and the vote by ballot; the petition received twenty two thousand signatures, and was to be presented by lord Althorp. I waited on the Rev. Robert Hall at his house for his signature, says the writer. He was then very ill, and confined to his room. After a short time he came to me in the parlour, dressed in his gown, shook me by the hand, took the petition and read it through. I wished to have saved him the trouble by telling him its contents, but this would not satisfy him. When he came to the *vote by ballot* he remarked in his usual quick manner, "that's right," and signed it. He then took the parchment to the fire, carefully examining it several times to see whether his signature was dried, and afterwards delivered it to me. It was the last signature to this petition, and I believe the last of a public nature he ever signed. Thus did this great man leave, by one of his last acts, his opinion, that without the vote by ballot the elective franchise would be of no advantage to the people."

## SECTION XXII.

A. D. 1822, 1823.

IN a Life written of Mr. Hall it would be highly improper to overlook that part of it, which though less known and less ostentatious, displays more of the interior of his character, than what came under a wider observation. Much as he excelled as a Preacher, he was not less eminent in the capacity of a christian Pastor. Amongst other regrets it is to be lamented that he has not left us a treatise of some sort on the subject of church fellowship, with its relative and official duties, than which nothing is more needful in the present state of religious society, where it is now too common to merge the pastoral duties in the acquisitions and engagements of a mere lecturer, or to discharge them chiefly in the shape of ordinary visits of complaisance and formality.

In the absence however of direct verbal instruction, his example may suggest in many instances some valuable counsel, on a subject less considered than its real importance seems to demand. Mr. Hall was indeed less mindful of ecclesiastical punctilios than some perhaps would contend for,

but he entered into the very soul and spirit of his official engagements, and gave an illustrious example of unremitting diligence and affectionate fidelity. Far from seeking his own repose, much as he needed it, or from debasing the sacred office to a genteel profession, or a source of emolument, he was in truth the faithful shepherd of the flock, 'over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer,' not only feeding them with knowledge and understanding by his public ministry, but by personally watching over their spiritual interests with intense solicitude.

He was as much beloved by the poor as by the opulent, and never suffered the needy to be forgotten, when it was in his power to visit them or minister to their relief. He made himself acquainted with their history, entered into all their sorrows and complaints, not merely from a momentary feeling of compassion, but with an impression that was never afterwards effaced from his memory; so that he could at any time relate the leading circumstances in the lives of the afflicted members of his church, and knew how to administer suitable advice and consolation. Often was he known to decline an invitation to a genteel party, rather than disappoint the expectation of some obscure individual on a sick or dying bed. Wherever poverty, decrepitude or misfortune, laid its chilling hand, there like 'a brother born for adversity' was he present with his aid. Disregarding personal inconvenience, he penetrated the attics of



the needy and the destitute, and returned with lacerations on his leg, from a decayed or broken staircase, only to renew the visit when a sense of duty called. Many of the afflicted poor remembered for years afterwards his sympathetic kindness towards them, and related with deep emotion the instances in which their cottage walls had resounded with the voice of prayer, and been made to them a little sanctuary, where the Highest himself vouchsafed his presence. A feeling of compassion for the poor accompanied him through life, and forsook him not in a dying hour. In every situation he was devising means for their relief, and in some of his last moments regretted that he had not been more mindful of their interests, while he tenderly meditated on the words of inspiration, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor,' and formed a resolution, had life been spared, to fulfil this important duty in a still more exemplary manner.

Notwithstanding the humbling sense he had of his own deficiency in this respect, others can bear witness of his kindness and liberality, and could relate some touching instances of the singular manner in which he was accustomed to exercise his benevolence. Collections were made for the poor of the church at Leicester at the close of the communion service, according to the general custom; and on these occasions Mr. Hall never failed to set an example of liberality, giving more in proportion than almost any other communicant.

When distribution was made, a certain portion was commonly left at his disposal, that his alms as well as his prayers might come up for a memorial before God. Acquainted as he was with the circumstances of individuals, he usually paid his morning visits earlier on these occasions than at other times, in order to meet the wants of the indigent, and indulge in that mental luxury which his own tenderness demanded. In some instances he reached the cottage door before the residents were prepared for his approach, when with unparalleled condescension he would assist the aged and infirm, in kindling the fire, sweeping the hearth, hanging on the teakettle, and providing what was necessary for their repast. With his box of kynaster in his pocket he would then calmly take his pipe, and with meek-eyed charity survey the humble scene, to him so rich with interest as to form some of the happiest moments of his life. His heavenly conversation meanwhile cheered the spirits of the lowly with the hopes of a better world, until the interview was closed with solemn and affectionate prayer, which left the needy and dependent bedewed with tears.

Independently of other circumstances, his tender and conscientious regard for the interests of the congregation seldom permitted him to exchange pulpits with other ministers, much as they wished a wider distribution of his labours, and the gratification of multitudes who had no means of enjoying them. But popularity courted him in

vain, to nothing was he more insensible ; he loved to dwell among his own people, to fulfil the ministry which he had received of the Lord, and to hide himself in the secret place of his pavilion. When pressinglly invited, in the early part of his ministry at Leicester, to make an excursion into South Wales, he declined it in a manner which shows at once his sense of duty, and the sacred principles which influenced the discharge of his pastoral office. In reply to his correspondent he remarked, “ I have one summer excursion in view already ; and a visit to so remote a part would occupy far more time than it would be proper for me to be absent from Leicester. I have had, in a manner, a new congregation to form ; so that any considerable absence is attended with serious inconvenience, as the people are as yet by no means compacted and consolidated. I consider it as the first duty of my life well to cultivate my own field, which is such at present as demands all my care, which I may say with humble gratitude it rewards, the Lord having in various instances set his seal to my poor labours. My ambition is to spread a savour of the knowledge of Christ in the connection where I am placed, content to leave the more enterprising and brilliant career of an evangelist to persons of more active and ardent minds.”

In administering the public ordinances he preserved that kind of equanimity and christian charity, which exhibited neither redundancy nor defect. His convictions on the subject of baptism grew

with the maturity of his wisdom; there was no faltering, no hesitation of any kind whatever; at the same time he candidly and justly admitted the sincerity of those who entertained different views of the subject, nor suffered himself for a moment to suspect their want of piety or integrity. On baptismal occasions he frequently selected for the topic of discourse, the nature and obligations of a christian profession, the solemn responsibility it involved, the difficulties and temptations attending it, and the consequent necessity of all those succours from above, which only could render it honourable and successful. When he enlarged more immediately on the rite to be administered, he indulged in no invectives, no pointed allusions; his statements in favour of the practice he adopted were unreserved and energetic, conducted with his usual acumen and force of reasoning; but to the auditor he would appear to be chiefly on the defensive, more concerned for the establishment of truth than the confutation of error, to conciliate than offend, and to produce that state of mind which is most favourable to impartial and calm enquiry. Instead of bringing forth his arguments with an air of triumph, they were offered rather in justification of a practice in which he was compelled, from conscientious motives, to differ from a great majority of the christian world, and from many whose talents and piety he held in the highest estimation. The weapons of his warfare were never sheathed in the vitals of his brethren;



the giant's strength was reserved for the adversaries of the gospel, the subverters of the faith, with whom he held no truce, and to them his indignant argumentation would show no mercy. Towards his brethren in Christ Jesus, though their sentiments might vary on some minor points, he displayed the meekness and gentleness of a little child; and notwithstanding his candour and forbearance on the subject of baptism, and the inoffensive manner in which his proofs were adduced, more persons were convinced of the divine authority of the institution, and more yielded to it a practical submission under his ministry, than would be found to have done so, under the ministry of those who adopt a different line of conduct, and have written such bitter things against him. During the latter years of his ministry, his infirmities did not often permit him to administer the baptismal rite himself; when he did so, he was remarkably solemn and animated; when assisted by others, he surveyed the scene with tranquil satisfaction, and addressed the candidates with pastoral affection and fidelity.

His manner of presiding at the Lord's table was remarkable for its simplicity, and was attended with one circumstance especially, differing from the ordinary practice. He did not invite the attendance of spectators, but followed the custom of the early ages, in considering the ordinance as peculiarly appropriate to the church, and to be administered only in presence of the communi-

cants. The common practice appeared to him as unnatural, he used to say, as if a number of persons were invited to be present at a family repast, of which they were not permitted to partake; and he could not endure to witness the exclusive position which they must occupy, while he himself was honoured with a seat at the sacred board. He also alleged that the presence of strangers was a bar to freedom, interrupting the meditation of the communicants, and the unreserved addresses of the pastor, who might sometimes have occasion to offer counsel or admonition peculiar to the circumstances of the church. He disapproved of the unscriptural and antisymbolical practice of placing on the table a number of small loaves, the representatives of so many distinct communities, instead of that 'one bread,' or one loaf, the true emblem of the mystical unity of the church, and of that 'one body' which was broken for us. In the distribution of the elements he was more scrupulous of the letter of the institution than is commonly observed, even by those who in other respects are tenacious of a literal conformity to positive rites. Instead of presenting the bread cut with a knife, and into pieces so small that they can only be tasted, it was his manner always to 'break' the bread, in commemoration of the body which was 'broken' for us, and into pieces which all could 'eat' as well as taste, according to the letter of the commandment. At the close of the solemnity he never presumed to add to the original institu-

tion, or to improve upon the example of the great Lord of the feast, by offering a third prayer or any other religious service: but according to the primitive pattern, 'when they had sung a hymn they went out.' During the celebration the beloved pastor seated himself by the table, spoke at intervals, not in any set phrase, but in accents of parental tenderness, 'strengthening and confirming the souls of the disciples,' and diffusing through the whole community a feeling of deep solemnity, till all were edified and all were comforted.

Anxious for the good of his charge, and for a still more abundant blessing on his labours, he introduced among them days of fasting and prayer, which for a considerable time were attended to once a quarter, mingled with reciprocal expressions of brotherly love. The service commenced at nine in the morning, solemn prayer was offered by the pastor and elders of the church, followed with conversation on the subject of personal religion, its difficulties and temptations, and on the means necessary to promote the interests of a spiritual life. These were seasons of great refreshment to the worthy pastor, who found in them an opportunity of ascertaining the state of his flock, the tone of religious feeling which prevailed among them, and of seeing the fruit of his own labour. Having frequently observed, what is too commonly to be lamented, the want of serious conversation among religious people, and too much reserve on the subject of experimental piety, he endeavoured

to correct this evil at a subsequent period, by publishing, more immediately for the use of the church members, "A collection of references to scripture passages, doctrinal, practical, and experimental; for the furtherance of knowledge and grace in all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. For every day in the year." And to this he prefixed the following notice—

"That the word of Christ dwell in us richly is an apostolical injunction, which no sincere christian will permit himself to neglect. It has been judged however, that some benefit might result from selecting a particular passage of scripture as the special subject of meditation for the day, by which the difficulty of choice might be obviated, and a certain rallying point be presented to the thoughts. It is also conjectured, that it is desirable that a number of christians be invited to make the same passage the subject of devout meditation, by which a tacit communion of minds may be maintained, and brotherly love promoted.

An expedient of this kind has long been adopted among the Moravian Brethren. A little volume is annually circulated among them, consisting of a passage of scripture for every day in the year; and their experience attests the advantage they have derived from such a humble instrument of piety. This small collection of passages for the ensuing year is offered to the candid attention of a particular christian society from a similar motive,



and with a view to the same benefit. The efficacy however of every instrument must depend upon its application; and if the members of the church, for whose use it is especially intended, will take the trouble to turn to their bibles, and meditate on the passage referred to for each day, it is surely no presumption to hope that they will be sensible of the benefit derived from it, in the cultivation of devotional feeling, and the encrease of fraternal affection. The texts are only referred to, and not printed at large, partly on the ground of economy, and partly because it has been supposed that the act of turning to the bible in order to peruse the text, may have the effect of engraving it more deeply on the mind, as well as of inviting attention to the context.

That this little manual may be productive of spiritual improvement, is the sincere and ardent prayer of the persons engaged in its compilation.

ROBERT HALL."

His own manner of reading the scriptures, both in family and in public worship, was singularly devout and unaffected, and with but little cadence. On the latter circumstance being remarked to him, he said that his Professor at Aberdeen took considerable pains to instruct the students to read and speak in public with as little cadence as possible, in order that they might be heard more distinctly by the audience. That in reading, the teacher would often call out, "Gentlemen, keep

your voice up—keep your voice up.” Hence Mr. Hall was seldom known to lower his tone much at the end of a sentence, or even of a paragraph; but employed a pause instead, to mark the close of a period. He also observed that many of the speakers in parliament, and in other large assemblies, were accustomed to elevate their voice rather than depress it at the close of a sentence, but that the depression should be as gentle as possible, unless where the speaker’s voice is powerful and commanding. It was alleged that such a mode of pronunciation tended to produce monotony. To this he assented, and remarked that a speaker with a slender voice had only a choice of evils; to speak so as not to be heard, or be liable to the charge of monotony. There was always however such a flexibleness in his voice, so much emphasis and gracefulness in his manner of reading and speaking, as effectually to secure him from the danger of monotony. Notwithstanding some disadvantages in addressing a large auditory, those who regularly attended his ministry could generally hear him distinctly; and the very tone of his voice, though feeble, gave to his addresses such a peculiar softness, that,

‘Like flakes of feathered snow,  
They melted as they fell.’

In the exercise of church discipline he was an eminent example of apostolic simplicity, and of true christian charity, never seeking to magnify

his office by the exercise of authority, but by the exemplification of the rarest virtues. From the purest of all sources he had learned 'how to behave himself in the house of God,' and was amongst his brethren as a nurse that cherishes her children. Lenient and forbearing, he was tender of character, sparing and reluctant in his censures, not the tyrant but 'the angel of the church.' Less studious of prescribed forms, than of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, he very properly considered that to be the true scriptural mode of church government which tends most to promote brotherly love, which brings the members into the closest religious contact, and is accompanied with the greatest faithfulness one towards another. Unwilling at any time to separate a member from communion, where the honour of religion did not absolutely require it, he resorted to every expedient that wisdom and piety could suggest, to restore the erring and the wandering, to heal and bind up that which was broken or driven away.

If individuals were dissatisfied with their connection, or with his ministry, as would sometimes be the case, he never adopted any hasty measures, but allowed them time for consideration. They were not excluded for nonattendance, if their character in other respects stood fair, and they preferred another place of worship; but it was a general rule that if any of the members absented themselves from communion for the space of twelve months, their union with the church was declared

to be dissolved; but to render individual liberty consistent with social order, no stigma was affixed by a vote of exclusion. One instance of this kind, a little singular, may serve instead of more, to illustrate the meekness and lowliness of this holy man. An elderly person, long a member of the church, but strongly inclined to hypercalvinism, had formerly been attached to the ministry of his excellent father, but could not well enjoy the son's preaching. "We should be glad to see you at our place, if you could attend only occasionally," said the pastor; "for you were a friend of my father's, and have long been in fellowship with us, and it would pain me very much to have the connection dissolved." Ah! I should be glad to attend, was the answer, if you could but preach like your blessed father. "Well, I preach as well as I can, but you can hardly expect me to preach so well as my father, for he you know was an eminent man." This mild and gentle reply softened the objection, and retained in communion one whom he respected for his father's sake, whose memory was endeared by every fresh recollection.

Another member of the church at Harvey Lane, a true representative of what remained of the old orthodoxy, was somewhat distinguished for his gift in prayer. Mr. Hall, though sufficiently averse to his ultra notions, knew well enough how to distinguish between piety and heresy, and how to estimate genuine religion, when found in erring and untutored minds, without suffering his reverence for its



sanctity to be diminished. Public prayer-meetings were often held on the sabbath evening, after sermons had been delivered in the morning and afternoon, and the pastor generally attended before the close of the evening service. The guardian and conservator of orthodoxy frequently took a part in the exercise, and Mr. Hall as uniformly prepared himself for what was expected to follow, falling on his knees, and paying devout attention to what referred more immediately to himself. As the admonitory prayer proceeded, with intercessions on his behalf, that he might be led into the ‘mysteries of the kingdom,’ and into the ‘deep things of God,’ that he might be made an ‘able minister’ of the new testament, not of ‘the letter but of the Spirit,’ and not shun to declare the ‘whole counsel of God,’—he repeatedly and audibly responded amen, and concluded the service by engrafting into his own prayer many of the petitions that had been offered up. So completely was his mind subdued by an overpowering sense of the importance of true religion, of his own unworthiness and utter insufficiency, that he seemed to cherish whatever tended to encrease his humility and self-abasement, and believed his religious and ministerial defects to be as great and as numerous as these petitions would imply. Such was certainly the opinion of those who attended these opportunities and most revered him, and who could no otherwise account for his deep prostration, on occasions which excited their tenderest sympathy, and their astonish-

ment at the illiterate presumption of his affected monitors and teachers. Yet when the principal conservator, 'set for the defence of the gospel!' died, the pastor preached a funeral sermon, and pronounced a eulogium on his integrity and piety.

The ardent adorer of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, like him also he loved righteousness and hated iniquity; he could neither bear with them that are evil, nor suffer the good to be oppressed. In all matters of church censure and discipline his mind was finely balanced, doing nothing by partiality, but avoided with equal care the two extremes, of connivance and undue severity. If prejudice or suspicion exhibited an unfounded charge against any one, or if misfortune or inadvertence was confounded with criminal intent, the unhappy individual found in his candour and liberality, in his judgment and discrimination, a sure protection from the unfeeling and censorious, who generally possess less real virtue than those whom they are anxious to render the objects of aversion. In instances where his own favourable opinion was overruled by a majority, which from the respect he entertained for the principle of congregational independence he never attempted to resist, he contented himself with the expression of his regret, and found solace in the indulgence of that sympathy with which his mind was so richly fraught, making his bosom the refuge of the injured and oppressed.

One circumstance however, if it did not show in

the people of Leicester a want of congeniality with the enlarged and enlightened views of their pastor, manifested at least on his part a remarkable degree of moderation and forbearance. He had always been the uniform and well-known advocate of christian communion, in contradistinction from baptismal or party communion; yet as there was a small minority in the church, supported by two or three inconvertibles, on whom a few rays of the distant wisdom of their ancestors so happily alighted, he never obtruded his sentiments on their attention, was never known to preach a sermon on the subject, and did not venture to interrupt the general harmony by proposing any measure of comprehension. A number of respectable pædobaptists, warmly attached to his ministry, were formed into a distinct society; with them he alternately communed in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and was over them in the Lord. Several of the baptist members expressed their fraternal affection by occasional communion with them, but still they existed as a separate society to the end of Mr. Hall's ministry among them.

Considering the actual state of things, the sentiments which pervaded the larger society, and the allusive statement which Mr. Hall himself has made upon the subject, it may be doubted whether his moderation in this instance was not carried to an extreme, and whether too much deference was not shown to the feeble glimmerings of an antiquated piety. "It is the general custom of our

churches," he observes, "whatever may be the sentiments of the majority, to continue the practice of strict communion, in almost every instance where the opposite system is incapable of being introduced with a perfect unanimity; in consequence of which it frequently happens that the constitution of the church continues to sanction strict communion, while the sentiments of a vast majority of its members are decidedly in favour of a contrary system; and in opposition to the usage which obtains on other occasions, the private sentiments of *the few* are made to regulate and controul the conduct of *the many*. Where, it may be asked, is the propriety, where the justice, of such a mode of proceeding? Whatever respect may be due to the conscientious though erroneous scruples of an upright mind, it is not easy to perceive why these should be permitted to prescribe to the better judgment of those whom *we* must necessarily consider as more enlightened.

"As the majority, convinced, as they are supposed to be, of the right of all genuine christians to communion, must necessarily regard the dissentients as being in error, it deserves to be considered in what manner error ought to be treated. Ought it to be the object of toleration, or should it be invested with dominion? Surely all it can reasonably claim is the former; but when in deference to it, the far greater part of a society refrain from acting agreeably to their avowed principles, and consent to withhold from another class of their



fellow christians what they consider as their undoubted right, they cannot be said merely to tolerate the error in question ; no, they in reality place it on the throne, and prostrate themselves before it. Yet strange as it may appear, such is at present the conduct of baptist societies. While there remains the smallest scantling of members averse to open communion, the doors, in compliance with their scruples, continue shut, and pædobaptist candidates, however excellent or however numerous, are excluded.

“ Thus the intolerance of one class of christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed, while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also extremely obvious in another view. The admission of members in our societies, it is well known, is determined by a majority of suffrages, where the minority is expected, and that most reasonably, quietly to acquiesce in the decision of the majority. But in the case under present consideration, where strict communion is practised in a church, the majority of whose members are of a contrary persuasion, the eligibility, not of an individual, but of a whole class of individuals, to an indefinite extent, is virtually determined by the judgment of the smaller, in opposition to the larger party.

“ The injustice of such an arrangement will perhaps be admitted : but how, it will be asked, can it be remedied ? Would it be proper to exclude

such as feel it impossible, with a good conscience, to commune with pædobaptists, in order to make room for the latter? Nothing is more remote from our intention. Without inflicting the slightest wound on those amiable and exemplary persons! who scruple the lawfulness of that measure, the remedy appears equally simple and obvious.

“Whenever there is a decided majority in a church, whose views are in unison with those we are attempting to recommend, let them throw down the barriers, and admit pious pædobaptists without hesitation; and let those whose principles deter them from joining in such a communion, receive the Lord’s supper apart, retaining at the same time all their rights and privileges unimpaired. By this simple expedient the views of all the parties would be met; the majority will exert their prerogative, and act consistently with their avowed principles; the pædobaptists will obtain their rights, and the abettors of strict communion will enjoy that state of separation and seclusion which they covet. By this means a silent revolution may be effected in our churches, unstained by a particle of violence or of injustice. But while the present plan is pursued, while we are waiting for the last sands of intolerance to run out, the domination of error and injustice may be prolonged to an interminable period, since of all creatures, bigotry is the most tenacious of life.”

## SECTION XXIII.

A. D. 1824—1826.

THE unpleasant circumstances about to be mentioned, being no other than what christian societies in general are liable to meet with, would have required no notice in this place, but for the unexpected results to which they led, and the influence they exerted on the future destiny of our lamented friend, who from this period began to be loosened from the soil in which he had so long flourished and been rendered fruitful.

But towards the close of 1824, symptoms of uneasiness, arising out of a case of church discipline, manifested themselves among the people, and involved in much perplexity the faithful pastor, who with all his candour and forbearance, was firm and inflexible where the honour of religion is concerned. In the present instance he was under the painful necessity of announcing from the pulpit the exclusion of a dishonest member, a practice he never adopted, except in cases of public notoriety, where the feelings of the offender were entitled to no indulgence, and where the credit of the christian profession demanded reparation. On

such an occasion his admonitions and censures were delivered with an awful solemnity, penetrating and appalling every heart. When intrigues were at work to screen the guilty, to neutralise the censure by unseasonable commiseration, he knew how to reprimand with just severity the conduct of those who would have compromised the integrity of the church. The affectionate pastor suffered long and was kind, but there was a point beyond which his forbearance could not extend; the honour of Christ was dearer to him than every other consideration, and when this was brought into competition he regarded no man's person, and calculated on no consequences. Inuendos were conveyed in anonymous letters, garbled statements appeared in a local newspaper, accompanied with reflections on the severity of his procedure; but instead of replying to any of these, or descending to any detail, he rested his defence on what St. Cyprian calls "the divine suffrage of the people." His words on this occasion were, "In their judgment I heartily concurred: but had it been otherwise, I could not have declined the duty assigned me, without assuming more of the highpriest than is consistent with my ideas of religious decorum."

The congregation continued in a state of uneasiness for some time afterwards, the personal friends of Mr. Hall were deeply concerned for the rude treatment he had met with; and though he continued his ministry with great composure, he began



to fear that much of his usefulness would be suspended.

An event soon afterwards transpired, which though for a time it added much to his perplexity, gave a new direction to his thoughts and feelings, and presented another and a more important field of labour.

Dr. Ryland died in May 1825, and Mr. Hall was summoned to Bristol to attend the interment, and deliver the funeral discourse. During this mournful visit some of his friends took the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the grounds of uneasiness which existed at Leicester, and anxiously availed themselves of it in order to effectuate his removal. Shortly after he returned home a letter was addressed to him by a respectable individual to sound him upon the subject; stating the high regard entertained towards him by the friends at Bristol, and the general wish that he would consent to take upon him the charge of the congregation at Broadmead.

Far from wishing to avail himself of the opportunity of being relieved of his present difficulties, he entertained almost an insuperable objection to leaving his situation, and felt deeply sensible of his inability to fill up the station assigned him. He also conceived so high an opinion of the personal piety and general excellence of Dr. Ryland, that he said, if he could even see his way clear to remove, he should still tremble at the thought of being placed where he must necessarily sustain a

comparison with his lamented friend. But should the church at Broadmead see fit to invite him to the pastoral office, he should still require time to consider of it, before he could give any thing like a decisive answer. On some accounts, he at the same time admitted, that he should prefer Bristol to any other place, especially as the state of things at Leicester was far from what he could have wished, though the scene began a little to brighten: and if nothing had occurred to disturb their long-continued tranquility, he should have thought of nothing but ending his days at Leicester.

In reply to subsequent solicitations he stated, that there still were difficulties which he knew not how to surmount. The church at Harvey Lane, informed of this correspondence, was greatly agitated, and adopted some prompt measures to repress existing grievances. The inducements to continue at Leicester, hitherto the scene of so much comfort and usefulness, and the motives to leave, were so nearly balanced in the mind of Mr. Hall, that he was still for some time held in painful suspense.

The congregation at Broadmead, intent upon their object, endeavoured to bring matters to an issue by more energetic means than an epistolary correspondence. A deputation waited personally on Mr. Hall to solicit his compliance, and to remove if possible the existing difficulties. He at length urged, as a principal objection, that he could not undertake conjointly the superintendence

of the church and the academy, as had usually been done by the pastor of Broadmead. This difficulty however was soon disposed of, the deputation bringing an invitation only on behalf of the church, and engaging their utmost endeavours to bring the academy under a distinct presidency.

Several months more elapsed, before Mr. Hall could fully make up his mind upon the subject. His inclination preponderated towards Bristol. It had been the scene of his early labours, was the place of residence of his family connections, as well as of many of his old friends, for whom he cherished the highest esteem, the situation offering at the same time equal if not superior prospects of usefulness; all these considerations had an influence on his feelings and his judgment, which he found it difficult to resist. Meanwhile, the pain it would give his friends at Leicester to leave them, the success which had attended his labours, the fear of displeasing God by deserting his post, and the injurious effects it might possibly have on the church which he had been mainly instrumental in raising from the dust, to a state of great prosperity,—all reduced him to a state of great embarrassment, and he must still beg another month, before he could possibly give a final answer.

In the early part of this negociation, when all was in a state of indecision, Mr. Hall evaded all enquiry among his friends at Leicester, who began to be sufficiently alarmed as soon as they discovered that attempts were making to remove him to

Bristol, and they augured from it some approaching catastrophe. Care was taken to hush into silence the voice of a disappointed faction, an appearance of peace and harmony was assumed, for the purpose of giving effect to a measure speedily to be adopted. The church in Harvey Lane assembled in the beginning of August, and unanimously agreed in an address, entreating their pastor not to leave them. It stated their apprehension of a project for dissolving his connection with them, that they would have been thankful if he had at once negatived every such attempt, and still hoped he would not yield to any solicitation. They remind him of the singular interposition of providence which brought him to Leicester, of the remarkable success which had attended his labours, and the still enlarging prospects of usefulness from a rapidly encreasing population; that no less than two hundred and forty persons had been added to the church, the greater part of whom had been baptised during his ministry; three of their number had been called to occupy useful stations in the ministry, and all classes of the community had been greatly benefited by his labours. The address concluded with an expression of regret, that “any unhappy differences among the members of the church” should have disturbed their pastor’s peace, and a hope that all would subside into harmony and love.

This address, while it carefully enumerates the motives that should induce Mr. Hall’s continuance,



arising chiefly from a survey of his extensive usefulness, offers no apology for the factious opposition he had met with in the faithful discharge of pastoral duties, nor does it so much as imply any censure on the character of that opposition, but passes over all that had happened as mere "differences among the members of the church," and leaves the pastor's conduct without a word of defence. Yet with all this want of moral delicacy, and of sympathy with his wounded feelings, Mr. Hall, whose magnanimity induced him at all times to lose sight of what was personal to himself, received the address with his usual candour and liberality.

The Morning church under his care, consisting chiefly of pædobaptist brethren, followed the example of the larger society, and addressed to him a letter full of condolence, and full of entreaties for his continuance among them. This was soon followed with an imploring address, numerously signed by the congregation at large, expressing the warmest gratitude for his past services, and the irreparable loss that would be sustained by his removal. Some of the leading gentlemen of the town of Leicester, occasional hearers, united with Mr. Hall's immediate friends in a proposal of building a new place of worship, and forming a new society on the liberal principles which he had so powerfully advocated, and were prepared for almost any sacrifice, rather than be deprived of his ministry and his friendship.

To none of these addresses and entreaties was Mr. Hall in a capacity to give any immediate or distinct reply ; he was still in a strait betwixt two, not knowing whether to abide or to depart. The church at Bristol pressed him to comply with their invitation, the church at Leicester pulled in an opposite direction ; and he, rent with anguish, knew not how to leave a people with whom he had been so long and so happily united. He sighed, he prayed, he wept, and begged to defer his answer till October.

When October came it found him in the same state, and he requested the indulgence of another month. Two months more elapsed, before he could arrive at any definite conclusion. He then accepted the invitation to Broadmead, on condition however, that he should be allowed to make trial of the situation for one year ; and if not mutually satisfactory at the end of that time, the union to be dissolved. Besides, he was not sure that the change would be favourable to his health, which at his age he deemed equivalent to life itself.

On the 21st of Dec. 1825, he addressed the following

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL.

Dear Brethren,

After long and mature deliberation and earnest prayer, I write these lines to inform you

that I accept the invitation you have been pleased to give me to the pastoral office. That it may become a mutual blessing, and that you and myself may reap the fruit of it, in the glory of God, the spiritual improvement of each other, and the conversion of sinners from the error of their way, will I trust continue to be, as it has already been, the object of your frequent and fervent supplications at the throne of grace. Be assured I feel deeply my utter inability for the adequate discharge of the weighty duties which devolve upon me, and particularly my unfitness to walk in the steps of your late venerated pastor. My only hope, amidst the discouragements arising from this quarter, is placed in 'your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus.' Conscious as I am of innumerable imperfections, I must rely on your candour for a favourable construction of my conduct and reception of my labours.

Permit me, my dear brethren, to conclude by commending you to God, and to the word of his grace.

R. HALL.

The tidings of his intended removal flew in every direction, subjecting him to a trial of heart and intellect which few would have been able to sustain. For several days his house was continually beset by persons of every grade and profession, in town and country, imploring him not to leave them. Almost every one of the congregation

begged an interview, to thank him for his public ministrations, his counsels and warnings, and to breathe out their ardent wishes for his future life and usefulness. Some of these interviews left an impression which nothing will be able to obliterate. Whithersoever he went he was perpetually greeted with expressions of regret and lamentation ; even the provincial papers deprecated his removal, and lamented that the town of Leicester should thus be deprived of its brightest ornament.

Shortly before he left, the congregation seemed to have recovered its tranquility, and to feel the encreasing power of his ministry. On the last sabbath he was saved the necessity of delivering a farewell address, by a previous engagement to preach two sermons for the baptist mission, according to his annual custom. But the time for his leaving Leicester being generally understood, brought together a crowded auditory, among whom were several persons of rank and title, and some sportsmen belonging to the chase. At the close of the morning service five persons were baptised. The gentlemen present, not accustomed to such a spectacle, eagerly pressed forward to witness the administration ; every countenance indicated great seriousness, and the audience generally were deeply affected.

In the afternoon Mr. Hall admitted the candidates to communion, after an impressive address, and then administered the Lord's supper. Here he poured out the most pathetic supplications for



the peace and prosperity of the church, for the rising generation, and especially for the children of his people, until language and utterance failed. The concluding petitions were mingled with sighs and weeping, and his manly face was plentifully suffused with tears. All command over feeling for a time was lost, a suppressed but simultaneous emotion pervaded the assembly, until it suddenly burst forth in one commingled stream of tenderness and love. A spectator would have been reminded of the parting between David and Jonathan, ‘who wept one with another, until David exceeded;’ and would have exclaimed, See how these christians love one another. Mr. Eustace Carey being present on a visit, interposed a few seasonable and tranquilising reflections, arising from the prospect of one day meeting to part no more, and where sorrow and sighing shall flee away. A solemn silence ensued, for nature could do no more; but the impressions produced on this interesting occasion will probably survive the limits of mortality. The services of the day, and the labours of the beloved pastor, closed with an admirable discourse from Matt. vi. 10, March 26th 1826.

On the 29th he left for Bristol, amidst the regrets and agonies of his weeping friends, whom he endeavoured to console with the hope that all would turn to their advantage. He had done but little good, he said, and feared that in future he should do less; and to mitigate the pain of separa-

tion he promised them an annual visit, as long as health and other circumstances would permit. Still, the congregation, the town, the society of Leicester, all deplored their loss, and felt a vacancy which his presence only could supply. Two persons travelling by coach soon after, entire strangers to each other, one of them said as they approached the town, What is Leicester now, more than any other place? Its brightest luminary, who had long been the centre of attraction to men of all denominations, is withdrawn, and Leicester now has nothing to signalise it, nothing to distinguish it from any other town. His companion was struck with these appropriate remarks, but could never ascertain by whom they were offered.

On the 3rd of April Mr. Hall addressed to his friends, from whom he had lately been separated, the following apostolical epistles, announcing his resignation of the pastoral office, and offering the most seasonable and affectionate advice.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, MEETING IN HARVEY LANE,  
LEICESTER.

My dear Brethren and Sisters,

I take this opportunity of solemnly and affectionately resigning the pastoral charge which I have long sustained among you, and of expressing at the same time the deep sense I shall ever retain of the marks of affection and esteem, with which both collectively and individually you have honoured me.

Though the providence of God has, as I conceive, called me to labour in another part of his vineyard, my solicitude for your spiritual welfare will ever remain unimpaired, nor will any thing give me more joy than to hear of your growth, peace, and prosperity. My prayers will never cease to ascend to the God of all comfort, that he will establish your hearts in love, unite you more and more in the fellowship of his saints, and make you fruitful in every good work.

Let me earnestly entreat you to guard most anxiously against whatever may tend to weaken your union, diminish your affections, or embitter your spirits against each other. ‘Let brotherly love continue. Seek peace, and pursue it; and may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, establish, strengthen, settle, and make you perfect.’

I hope that in the choice of a successor, you will earnestly and unanimously seek divine direction, prefer the useful to the splendid, the solid to the glittering and the showy, and be supplied with a pastor who will in doctrine exhibit incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; and in manners and behaviour be a pattern to all believers.

Permit me on this occasion to return you my sincere acknowledgments for the uniform kindness with which you have treated me, the respectful attention you have constantly paid to my ministry,

and the candour with which you have borne my infirmities. With my most earnest prayers for your spiritual and eternal welfare, I remain, my dear brethren and sisters,

Your obliged and affectionate friend and brother,  
ROBERT HALL.

Under the same date he sent his resignation to the Morning church, the members of which had uniformly manifested towards him the highest degree of christian courtesy, and their harmony had not at any time been interrupted. This letter, it will be seen, is altogether commendatory, and full of christian complacence.

TO THE OPEN COMMUNION CHURCH, MEETING IN  
HARVEY LANE, LEICESTER.

My dear Brethren and Sisters,

I take this opportunity of expressing my warmest acknowledgments, for the uniform kindness and attention I have received at your hands, at the same time that I resign my pastoral charge among you.

Let me hope, my dear friends, that you will still continue your communion, since you may rest assured that the congregation and church at Harvey Lane will never make choice of a pastor, who will scruple the communion of pious pædobaptists; and I have little doubt that in a short time the middle wall of partition will be broken down, an event which I well know would



give great pleasure to a vast majority of the baptist society.

Be assured, my dear friends, that the difference of sentiment between us, on one point of very inferior importance, has never for a moment abated anything of my esteem for your character, or my sense of your kindness.

I have had my trials, but I must in justice say, they have in no degree arisen from *you*, whose religious deportment has uniformly been such as to give me pleasure. I am so conscious of the credit which your exemplary conduct has reflected on the christian profession, that I cannot suppress my anxiety that you may continue your communion at Harvey Lane, not doubting that it will terminate ere long in that entire coalition with your fellow christians, which the principles of christianity demand.

That the God of peace may take up his abode among you, and enrich you abundantly with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, is the sincere prayer of, my dear brethren and sisters,

Your obliged and affectionate friend and brother,

ROBERT HALL.

The day before Mr. Hall left Leicester, the annual meeting of the neighbouring ministers, consisting of baptists and pædobaptists, was held at Arnsby, at which Mr. Hall had been accustomed to attend, when they cordially united in presenting to him the following address.

TO THE REV. R. HALL, ON HIS LEAVING LEICESTER.

Dear Sir,

On the occasion of your removal from a situation which for so many years has afforded us opportunities of accepting your friendship, and of advantage from your instructions, we are desirous of conveying to you the sentiments and feelings of our high respect and warm affection, and of offering for your acceptance, the expression of our fervent wishes for your health, your comfort and happiness, and your usefulness.

In the enjoyment of our invaluable liberties we are too much accustomed to the cultivation of mental independence, to allow us the use of language inconsistent with our convictions of truth; and we should not presume to offer you this address, if we were not fully satisfied, that in presenting it we are maintaining our integrity inviolate. ‘Render honour to whom honour is due,’ is a christian precept, and we fulfil its obligation in part, in the united tribute which we present of our homage to your genius and talents, and of our veneration for your virtues. In this fulfilment of our duty it is gratifying to us that we cannot be subjecting ourselves to any suspicion of insincerity or flattery, the wise and good of every denomination being united in conceding the eminence of your reputation, and in conferring upon your name the most honourable distinctions.

Of the perversion of the faculties, which distinguish man from the creatures around him, and the injuries which eloquence, apart from wisdom and goodness, has inflicted upon mankind, the proofs are but too numerous and calamitous in the history of the species. Our own times have exhibited examples of the most brilliant genius employed in the service of corruption. As committed to your trust, these high endowments are consecrated by their alliance with piety, and sanctified by their relation to the noblest and the highest ends to which divine gifts themselves can be subservient. Of the manner in which the principles and practice of evangelical religion have been illustrated and enforced by your ministry, our recollections supply us with the most grateful testimonies. Nor can we omit to record, that as often as we have been in danger of being seduced into the admiration of popular but artificial declaimers, reference to the character and examples of your eloquence, chaste, simple and majestic, has preserved us from the influence of applauded but unnatural and unedifying models.

Our high respect however is tendered to you, on other accounts besides the deference which is due from us in acknowledgment of talents known to all, and appreciated by all. The kindness which you have ever manifested towards us, and the courtesy with which we have been uniformly received and treated by you, are included in our motives for addressing you. We recollect with

pleasure the freedom which you kindly permitted us, and gratefully express our sense of obligation for your friendly and affectionate attentions.

This address is not presented *exclusively* by ministers of the denomination to which your name attaches so much honour, and this circumstance we hope will render it not less acceptable. With one class of professing christians rather than with another, the convictions of individuals will reasonably induce them to unite. If the integrity of your principles has given you external connection with a particular denomination of christians, we have not now to learn that your affections have the most ample range—that your spirit is liberal and catholic—and that the prevalence of candour and forbearance among christians, and the union of all Christ's disciples, are objects of your devout aspirations and most cherished regards.

We regret your departure from our neighbourhood, and we cannot but be sensible of the privations which we shall have to deplore in your removal. This we acknowledge is a selfish feeling; we are however not willing that it should be suppressed. But we should be reprehensible if we did not advert to circumstances connected with your removal, and permit them to temper our personal feelings in relation to it. You are not necessitated by incapacity to retire from active scenes, and useful labours, into solitude. You are not removed from us by that visitation which in respect to all temporal connection, is final to man.



Nor is your removal from us a separation which precludes our hope of again seeing you occasionally amongst us. We unite in thankful acknowledgments to the Giver and Preserver of life, that his mercies are still attending you—that you enjoy so much health, and so much competency for the duties of your office, and that your departure from the station to which for so long a time you have been an ornament, is only for the purpose of entering into new christian relations, of greater importance and of larger promise.

You are not unacquainted with the numerous practical evils which afflict our churches, by which the cause of truth is obstructed, and their prosperity checked and blighted; and which, but in too many instances, issue in the separation of ministers from charges long occupied by them. We refer to them for the purpose of expressing our hope, that you will enjoy a happy exemption from their influence, that no ‘root of bitterness’ will spring up to trouble you, but that your mind will be permitted to repose in undisturbed tranquility, and that you will behold the peace and harmony of the society over which you are called to preside. May your ministrations be duly appreciated and improved, and be productive of great and lasting benefits. In all your relations may you be honoured and happy. And for these, and all other objects of our desires and prayers for you, may the effusions of divine grace, and the blessing of God be richly imparted to you.

This address having been signed by five and twenty of the neighbouring ministers, and conveyed to Mr. Hall by one of their number, he returned the following answer, after his arrival at Bristol.

*April 10th 1826.*

My dear and honoured Brethren,

I sincerely thank you for the very flattering testimony of your esteem, contained in an address recently presented to me. It is impossible for me to be insensible to the honour conferred upon me by this warm and cordial expression of your regard, of the sincerity of which your character affords the surest pledge; while I must be allowed to add, that it would have given me still more satisfaction, had it been couched in terms more proportioned to my qualifications and pretensions. Next to the approbation of the Searcher of hearts, the esteem of the wise and good is the richest reward a mortal can enjoy; and though conscious of not meriting the distinction you have conferred upon me, it will operate on me, I trust, as a stimulus, prompting me to endeavour to render myself less undeserving of it.

That you, my dear and honoured brethren, may long be continued in your present spheres of usefulness, and enjoy the sublime gratification and reward of turning many to righteousness, is the sincere prayer of, dear brethren,

Your obliged and affectionate friend,  
and humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

## SECTION XXIV.

A. D. 1826, 1827.

VERY few ministers, after serving for a number of years three distinct and large congregations, have still retained the supreme place in their affections, each vying with the other in continual proofs of attachment to the very end of life; and fewer still could have borne with so much becoming diffidence the growing applause which everywhere followed our inestimable friend. Its only effect on his mind was, to encrease his self-abasement, and elicit from him the remark, that men's esteem often arises from their ignorance of our true character. It filled him with surprise to find himself so much caressed, and with gratitude for favours so numerous and undeserved.

The following extract of a letter, dated June 17th 1826, giving an account of his reception at Bristol, soon after his arrival, sufficiently shows that no talent, however splendid, that nothing but a high degree of moral excellence, could have commanded that veneration and esteem that was constantly paid him.

“The kindness of friends from all quarters is,

says he, more than equal to my utmost wishes. They all seem most anxious to contribute to my ease and comfort. My reception is in this respect beyond any thing I had presumed to expect, and incomparably beyond my deserts. I certainly find the society of this place more intelligent and more polished, and in this respect superior to that of Leicester. Not that they have more native talent, perhaps on the whole less, but a far greater proportion of them are in easy circumstances, and therefore have more leisure for reading and conversation. I have reason to hope also that there is a considerable prevalence of piety among the members of the church, though by no means confined to them. The congregation is quite as numerous as I wish. We are well attended in the morning, and in the evening very full, so that seats are placed in the aisles. I feel complete satisfaction respecting the propriety of the measure which I took; and indeed it has long been my opinion, that ministers may stay too long in the same place; a removal, after a certain number of years, is best both for them and their hearers."

His strength however soon began to fail him, and after preaching twice on the sabbath he was frequently so much exhausted as to fall asleep on the sofa, immediately after he had reached home, though he was conveyed at all times in a vehicle provided for that purpose. Having taken a little repose after the labours of the day, he would rise suddenly and call for the bible, saying Come, let



us have prayer; and often fell asleep before the chapter was ended. He much regretted his inability to walk, as it prevented his making pastoral calls, and visiting the sick, to which he had been accustomed in his former situations. He had generally for years objected to dining from home, as a waste of time and giving unnecessary trouble; his friends therefore engaged him to tea, and invited parties to meet him, sending a car for him at six o'clock, and conveyed him back about ten. He was much pleased with this plan; but owing to his numerous engagements it was necessary to make the appointment a fortnight beforehand, and for one of the family to keep a diary of the invitations.

Hoping a journey might be beneficial to his health, he in the following September visited his friends at Leicester, where he preached one sabbath, on his way to Cambridge; and on seeing them his countenance beamed with gladness. Now said he, I feel at home again: these are all old faces, many of those at Bristol are new ones. He added at the same time, that he was happy in his new situation, liked the society, and felt encouraged by the prospects before him.

Arrived at Cambridge, he received the warm congratulations of numerous friends, all of whom were rejoiced to see him, though it was painfully evident that his constitution was failing under the continual pressure of disease. His mental faculties were in no degree impaired, his preaching was

as vigorous as usual, and being surrounded by his old friends, his countenance assumed a highly animated appearance. Several persons went from London, and from various parts of the country, to enjoy the treat. So numerous was the attendance that the place was not sufficient to contain the people, great numbers were obliged to retire, and some found it necessary to go an hour before the commencement of the service to secure a sitting.

One sabbath morning, from an accession of pain, he was scarcely able to attend the meeting, and could only take part of the service. He arrived late in a private carriage, and from the crowds already assembled he reached the pulpit with much difficulty, the aisles being everywhere thronged with hearers. The last sabbath evening during this visit it was found necessary to prop up the galleries, the place was crowded to excess, some hundreds could not gain admission, and even standing places in the aisles and passages were retained with difficulty from the pressure of the multitude. On this occasion he delivered one of his most energetic discourses, and towards the close his flight of eloquence was so rapturous that it seemed as if the pulpit would scarcely contain him.

On reentering the carriage after service, he remarked that he had never witnessed such a scene in any place where he had preached, and from the pulpit it was almost terrific. He "could not see the bodies of the people, they appeared all heads, a mass of undistinguishable heads, and all eyes

were fixed on him." He felt heartily glad that his occasional labours at Cambridge were now closed, and said it was become a formidable undertaking to preach there, knowing that some distinguished members of the university were generally among his auditors, and how much would be expected from him.

During this visit Mr. Hall preached also at Melbourne, where he had for an auditor that consistent friend of civil and religious liberty, lord Dacre, who afterwards waited for an interview at a gentleman's seat in the neighbourhood, where a large party was assembled for the same purpose. His lordship conversed with Mr. Hall some time, sitting on the sofa, and afterwards expressed his astonishment at his powers of conversation. Besides his range of thought, his vivacity and cheerfulness, which diffused around him a feeling of serenity and delight, there was also in Mr. Hall's manners so much amenity and gracefulness, so much in-artificial courtesy and politeness, as to make his company pleasant to the most refined and polished part of society, and entitled him to be regarded as one of nature's true nobility.

Mr. Hall went through the usual routine whenever he visited Cambridge; alike beloved by all classes of the congregation, he divided his time as much as possible among them. He breakfasted with one family, dined with another, and supped with a third, and it generally took him three weeks at least to fulfil these engagements. He had as

usual a parting interview with the old and poorer members of the church, observing to them what changes time and other circumstances had made, and how few of his personal acquaintances were left amidst a numerous auditory. At the close of his visits he invariably received a pledge of the attachment of his friends at Cambridge, who presented him with a purse of voluntary offerings, more than sufficient to defray his journeying expenses, and at parting were ready to follow the example of the Ephesian elders, who fell on Paul's neck and saluted him.

After his return to Bristol his health appeared in a very precarious state, attended with an unusual depression of spirits, and a transient feeling of disquietude on the subject of his late removal, arising out of some objections to his favourite plan of catholic communion by a few bigoted individuals who, as in the former instance, were not very observant of the respect due to his station and his character. Finding himself one day unable to walk, from pain in the chest and shortness of breath, he remarked to a friend who was with him that it was quite a new symptom. He then added, "I never had this till I became so anxious about leaving Leicester. I have been very much perplexed, fearing I have not been in the path of duty in removing; and you cannot conceive the conflict I have had. The parting was very painful, but I acted for the best, and have only engaged myself for twelve months; so that if I do



not find myself happy, I dare say the friends at Leicester will be glad to have me back." About this time those around him began to be very apprehensive that he would live only a few years.

Notwithstanding these alarming appearances, his state of health was afterwards improved, his spirits revived, and he was enabled to continue his labours with considerable energy and success. In a letter dated April 1827, he says, "Our congregation continues very good, rather encreasing than otherwise; and the kindness of the people continues undiminished. I wish I could see more indications of usefulness, yet have reason to hope I do not labour in vain. My health is also through mercy very good; the recent complaint in my breast is not removed, but I think it is somewhat abated."

With all his candour and christian courtesy towards individuals of the established church, his objections to the constitution of the church, and its alliance with the state, retained all their force, and rather encreased than diminished with advancing years. He beheld with extreme disgust the late practice of some dissenting ministers in going over to the establishment, while the ranks of non-conformity are continually receiving additions by the secession of conscientious men, who can no longer minister in a worldly sanctuary. Some of the late conformists profess indeed to become "churchmen from conviction," while it is but too apparent that other motives have had their influ-

ence. If a dissenting minister finds his ecclesiastical authority invaded, or the infallibility of his judgment suspected, by the independent society with which he is connected ; if he thinks his talents overlooked by the denomination to which he belongs, or his labours undervalued by the congregation he serves ; he then finds it convenient to become a churchman “from conviction,” and retires to an asylum where neither his temper nor his talents are likely to meet with any scrutiny. But what instances are there of men distinguished for ability and piety, zeal and usefulness, brought up and thoroughly initiated in the principles of dissent and of religious liberty, surrendering themselves up to a diocesan, and joining in the pomp and ceremony of a national religion, founded or annihilated by act of parliament.

When a young man at Bristol, whose parents were dissenters, was preparing himself for the church, and wished to consult Mr. Hall about a course of reading, he declined all interference, saying, “ His tutor is the proper person to recommend the best books. I have met with the same thing before, and have had my name bandied about everywhere with the books I have recommended. I shall therefore do no such thing. Besides, it would be very inconsistent in me as a dissenter, to be accessory to his going into the church, especially as his parents also are dissenters. I can make every allowance for a conscientious young man, who has been educated a churchman ; but

I can scarcely conceive it possible for any youth, having been brought up a dissenter, seriously to decide in favour of the church, without having some sinister ends in view. The argument upon this subject is very clear, and lies in a very narrow compass. Christ is the sole lawgiver in his church. He said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world:’ it was to be distinct and separate. Whoever then attempts to connect his kingdom or church with the state, or with the honours, the dignities and emoluments of this world, whatever may be the pretense, makes it a worldly sanctuary, and disobeys the will of the lawgiver.”

Mr. Hall was exceedingly fond of architectural antiquities, and though not a student in the art he was a good judge of such matters, and seldom visited where an object of this sort was to be seen without gratifying his taste by a close inspection. Being one day at a place in the west of England where an ancient cathedral presented itself, he hastened to the spot, and was conducted through the spacious aisles by the verger, who was totally unacquainted with the quality of his visitor. While he was admiring the solemn grandeur of the edifice, his attendant remarked that the bishop was very well off, and derived a large revenue from the whole of his diocese. Mr. Hall, recollecting the anti-evangelical character of the prelate and his strong aversion to the orthodox clergy, sarcastically replied, “I understand it is a rich diocese, and he had need to make the best

of it, for it is *all* the portion he is ever likely to possess."

June 20th 1827, Mr. Hall preached at the annual meeting of the baptist mission-society, which was held in London; but unfortunately not one third of the large audience could hear him, though he exerted himself to the utmost. He was afterwards solicited to print the sermon, for the gratification of those who could not hear, and for the benefit of the mission, but declined it. The sermon itself, though a very good one, was not one of his best efforts; and it is believed that nearly all his superior discourses were delivered at home in his own pulpit. No man enjoyed society more than Mr. Hall, but he always required it to be limited and select; there was something in public associations and multitudinous meetings so uncongenial with his habits and feelings, that when forced into them he had little enjoyment, and had besides an insuperable objection to every thing like ostentation and parade in matters of religion. He did not attend the Report meeting of the society, but carefully avoided being called upon to make a speech, and spent the interval with two or three confidential friends, to whom he disclosed the feelings with which he was at that time oppressed, from the unrighteous treatment he had met with at the hands of one or two inconsiderate individuals in some recent instances.

About the time the annual meetings began to be held in London, soon after the decease of



Mr. Fuller, he deprecated the change of system, and the parade attending the anniversaries. "Our society said he has done much, and said little; it shows itself in its effects, not in its preparations. I am much grieved that it is about to relinquish that praise, and to vie with others in the noise and ostentation of its proceedings. Why should we at last imitate what we have so long condemned." At another time he said, "There should be less speaking, and more prayer; for that only has power with God. Before the final prevalence of christianity, the church, the pure church of Christ, will appear in her original simplicity, using no other weapons than those of union, of prayer and of supplication."

The affectionate interest he had taken in the mission, and his generous exertions on its behalf, led him also to deplore the schism which had taken place in reference to the brethren at Serampore, who had in effect renounced their connection with the parent society, and appropriated to themselves the exclusive management of that part of the mission which came under their own immediate inspection; yet, claiming at the same time, an annual exhibition from the funds of the society. Unable to attend a committee for taking the whole of this matter into consideration, Mr. Hall addressed to them a letter, stating his opinion that, while it might be proper to tender occasional assistance to that branch of the mission, it would be highly inexpedient to stipulate for annual

payments, or hastily to comply with the requisition of the missionaries for a determinate part of the society's income, more especially as they had by a deed of settlement secured to themselves the entire acquisitions at Serampore, whether arising from public contributions or their own personal exertions conjointly, and had virtually at least subjected the home society to a sort of feudal dependence in all time to come, on persons whom they knew not, whose characters could not be ascertained, and whose conduct was not under their controul.

Entertaining this rational and consistent view of the subject, Mr. Hall often lamented that he had not the concurrence of his philosophic friend who, to use his own words, had he not been "so credulous of the delusive representations," by the plausible and interested agent of the Serampore establishment, "would not have written a single sentence of that letter" which he has lately given to the public, reflecting not only on the judgment and impartiality of Mr. Hall, and of Dr. Ryland, whose authority he is sometimes anxious to quote, but also on that of the committee, who had the best possible means of information, and whose decision is accorded by a large majority of the subscribers throughout the country.

On his return from London to Bristol he slept at Newbury, unable to bear the fatigue of so long a journey; and having been several days from

home, mixed up with various company, and jaded with almost incessant conversation, his physical and moral powers began to flag, and needed some repose. He therefore retired to the inn, intending to remain incog. An estimable young minister, then stationed at Newbury, having been previously informed of his expected arrival, hastened to the inn, entreating him to accept accommodations at the house of a friend. Mr. Hall peremptorily refused the offer, ordered a bed at the inn, and seemed not in the mood to receive a stranger. But having placed himself in a reclining posture, and lighted his pipe, his visitor ventured to introduce a little conversation relative to the excellent Samuel Pearce, and hinted his having understood that Mr. Hall had been the means of introducing him to the congregation at Birmingham. Mr. Hall replied rather sharply, "There was no merit at all in that, sir. It requires no sagacity for a man to discover the sun; and the highly estimable qualities of Pearce were equally conspicuous." After appearing for a little while repulsive, he entered into a calm and friendly conversation, and at length conceived an attachment which was cherished to the end of life.

He detailed the incidents of his late visit in London; and having noticed the vast crowds of persons who have of late years acquired the habit of frequenting public meetings, he expressed an apprehension that in many instances it served only as an apology for the neglect of private devotion.

He feared it was a symptom of the soul being in such a state, that it shrunk from retirement and self-examination, and found a refuge in appearing frequently in public services. It looked as if the piety of some christians was so meagre in its character, that it could exist only under the excitement produced by large public assemblies.

He then offered some striking remarks on the injurious effects on the minds of ministers, occasioned by their preaching too frequently. The demands of such congregations as expect three sermons on the Lord's day, were preposterously unreasonable, as has been made apparent in too many instances. They make a demand which no man can adequately meet. An attempt is made to satisfy it; the result very shortly is, the congregation begin to complain of the exercises of the pulpit as being crude and insipid. Hurried and frequent preaching, he remarked, upon the affecting and all-important doctrines of salvation, seriously injures and impoverishes the mind, exhausts the power of feeling, dries up the dew of a man's sensibility, and leaves the soul to chill in the coldness of apathy.

Before Mr. Hall left Newbury, he visited his old acquaintance Mr. Bicheno, formerly pastor of the baptist church in that place, and the well-known author of some valuable dissertations on prophecy, published soon after the French revolution of 1789, and having reference to that great event. Mr. Bicheno had long been in a state of deep



affliction from a paralytic affection, and was overjoyed on receiving so unexpected a visit from one whom he had long held in the highest estimation. The delicacy of Mr. Hall's conduct on this occasion was evidently the result of a profound understanding, of feelings deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and highly characteristic of his usual candour and christian kindness.

The theological speculations of his afflicted friend were on some points equivocal; he doubted the athanasian hypothesis, and preferred the notion of a modal trinity; but his speculations had no visible influence on his practical or devotional system; his piety was sincere and unquestionable; his whole deportment upright and unblemished. Mr. Hall approached his bedside, not to put interrogatories on points of doctrine, not to measure the extent of his creed, but to sound the depth of his experience, to ascertain the foundation of his hope, and to pour into his soul those heavenly consolations which suited the condition of a dying christian. With exquisite tenderness he pressed the hand of his afflicted friend, and for a few minutes his emotions rendered him unable to say more than, "How are you—how do you do?" Then, after awhile, "Where have you put your trust for salvation and eternal life?" On the rock, on the rock alone, was the answer. "And do you feel happy in relying on the atonement of Christ Jesus?" Yes, perfectly so. I have nowhere else to go for eternal life. This answer was accom-

panied with a flood of tears. Mr. Hall declined asking any farther questions. He then closed the interview by offering up appropriate supplications, full of pathos and the most touching simplicity.

In the autumn of this year Mr. Hall paid another visit to his friends at Leicester, where he continued for three weeks, and appeared like a father among his children, visiting from house to house, and leaving none unnoticed. Anxious to afford to others the pleasure of an interview, some of them gave a sort of general entertainment; but being soon wearied and oppressed with such profuse attentions, he determined to limit their hospitalities by delivering a pointed discourse from Luke x. 38—42, which had the desired effect. He looked in pretty good health, says a correspondent, but seemed aged; yet its chief effect was that of imparting additional dignity to his countenance, and weight to his character. He could walk but little, and was unable to read without spectacles, a circumstance which had not before been observed at Leicester. “We have also noticed the general absence of those brilliant displays of wit and humour in conversation, which used to flash upon us with so much startling delight; instead of this there is now a steady glowing brightness, a vivid mildness of conception that warms and cheers, and yields a more permanent satisfaction. The habitual theme of his ministry now amongst us is, the love of

Christ, in its varied modifications; the example of Christ, as the perpetual object of imitation; and the indispensable obligation of christians to love one another. During this visit we have been frequently reminded of 'that disciple whom Jesus loved,' at the period when he wrote his balmy epistles, himself mellowed with love, 'walking high in salvation and the climes of bliss.'"

In some casual conversation while at Leicester, Mr. Hall intimated that a letter had been addressed to him by a baptist minister, containing a remonstrance on the subject of Open Communion, and requesting a correspondence in the hope of convincing him of his error; a likely means certainly, of accomplishing such an object, after the arguments of his opponents had long before been shivered to atoms by the thunder of his eloquence. Mr. Hall however replied to this well-meaning brother, that he was surprised to find him so little acquainted with human nature, as to suppose anything *he* could say would have any influence on an 'old man' like himself, who had long been confirmed in his convictions on that subject. For his own part he had no hope of converting his correspondent to *his* opinions, or any other man of his age. What he had published was chiefly with a view of inducing the rising generation to investigate the subject for themselves, and in them alone his hopes terminated. In another conversation he remarked, he was glad to find in numerous instances the fortress of

bigotry had been stormed with success, and he had no doubt but liberal and enlarged conceptions on the subject of christian communion would universally prevail; and that truth, discharged of the weight that now depressed it, would soar aloft, and assert its native supremacy.

The ardour and the constancy of Mr. Hall's friendships formed a lovely trait in his character, too rarely exemplified and too lightly esteemed, though it is emphatically said of Him who is the pattern of all perfection, that having loved his own which were in the world, 'he loved them unto the end.' And amongst men there were but few instances of fidelity so strongly marked, as in the character of our lamented friend, whose attachments, founded in moral worth, and strengthened by congeniality of disposition, were not liable to fluctuate with the changing scenes of life; instead of being chilled by adversity, they gathered strength from misfortune, and the voice of friendship sounded with a deeper sympathy in the hour of distress. His powerful discrimination enabled him to select, amidst the common frailties of humanity, some leading point of character on which he could dwell with complacency, without being under the necessity of discarding from his affections such as did not display all the excellencies he could wish. His early intimacies were especially preserved with scrupulous care, and kindnesses conferred were never to be forgotten. At the most delicate and important period of his



life, the friend and companion of his youth happily rendered himself subservient to his wishes and his interest, by receiving into his family the intended partner of his days; and on his decease he addressed the following letter to his only son, gratefully recollecting these circumstances, and mingling with his sympathies the incense of a well-deserved encomium on modest worth, pure and unsullied, obscured only by adversity.

LETTER TO MR. GILL TIMMS ON THE DEATH OF  
HIS FATHER.

*October 22nd 1827.*

My dear Friend,

It has been too much my custom to let my letters accumulate, sometimes for a week, and then to answer them all together. This must be my apology for not replying sooner to yours of the 12th instant, to which, had I perused it earlier, I should have replied without delay.

I am deeply concerned at the melancholy intelligence it contains, and most sincerely sympathise with you under your irreparable loss. You have indeed lost a father who secured the greatest regard from all that knew him; how much more from one to whom he stood so nearly and dearly related. I have scarcely ever known a more amiable man, one more imbued with the milk of human kindness, or who placed more of his happiness in contributing to the happiness of others.

As these qualities endeared him while living, to a large circle of friends, so the remembrance of them will make him long and deeply regretted now he is no more. But while in one view it is painful to reflect on those features of his character which enhance your loss, it is pleasing to reflect upon them in another, since they give you the utmost assurance of his present felicity.

He is gone to that region of love which was his element while he lived, and which so eminently qualified him for the inheritance of the saints in light. You will I trust, my dear sir, still enjoy the benefit of his prayers, and of his example; and after serving your generation according to the will of God, be permitted to rejoin him, never more to part. The influence of religion and of time will I trust mitigate the anguish of this stroke, and your present agitation of mind subside into a not unpleasing melancholy.

The intelligence was deeply affecting to myself and Mrs. Hall, who always retains the warmest sense of the kindness she received under his hospitable roof. She begs to unite with me in most affectionate remembrance to yourself, and your excellent sister.

I am, my dear sir, with deep sympathy and regard,

Your's affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

## SECTION XXV.

A. D. 1828, 1829.

MR. HALL'S encreasing infirmities, which now became painfully evident to all his friends, did not abate the fervour of his zeal, nor the usefulness of his public labours. The church under his care continued to be revived, was oft replenished with large additions to their number, and in the space of two or three years only, nearly a hundred persons were baptised. One of these groups of candidates who attested the power of his ministry, afforded him unusual satisfaction. It consisted of persons of almost every grade ; one was a lad of thirteen, another a woman of seventy five, one a respectable lady, another a person in the most servile situation, one reclaimed from infidelity, and another from the errors of socinianism ; and as they passed under review, previously to the administration of the ordinance, Mr. Hall walked up and down the vestry as if in the buoyancy of youth.

His spirituality and heavenly-mindedness encreased as he approached his final home, greater plainness and simplicity pervaded his discourses, an awful solemnity dwelt upon his spirit, and a

cloud of glory seemed to rest upon the tabernacle. His constant hearers, accustomed as they were to his inspiring eloquence, could not but observe his growing familiarity with the unseen world, and the calm delight with which he awaited its approach. A stranger would perhaps be still more struck with it; and one passing through Bristol remarked to a correspondent, that he had heard Mr. Hall deliver a discourse which was “distinguished for its majestic simplicity, and enriched with sentiments similar to those which appeared in the productions of St. Paul, just before he was offered up. It was the offspring of a soul, not only vast in intellectual power and imbued with pious affections, but of a soul ardently dilating with the grandeur of eternity, and encompassed with a radiance so divine as to impress you with the thought that he was constantly hovering upon a world of spirituality and glory.”

Mr. Hall's preaching excited such general attention that nearly all the ministers of the city, including many of the established clergy, were in the habit of attending his weekday lecture, and engaged regular sittings for that purpose. Some gentlemen from Bath, and other parts of the neighbourhood, made frequent visits, and appeared to be highly interested in his preaching. Amongst other important advantages resulting from Mr. Hall's being stationed at Bristol, and which was no doubt contemplated by the patrons of the Academical institution, was that of affording to



the candidates for the christian ministry, a model worthy of their imitation, by placing before them the great master of sacred eloquence. The students heard with the deepest reverence; as soon as he began to preach they might be seen inclining forward with fixed attention, apparently unconscious of the presence of any one besides, while they gathered fruit from the tree of life, and sat under its shadow with great delight. Mr. Hall likewise admitted them successively to a parlour conversation, in which he familiarised himself among them, and imparted with parental tenderness instruction and advice adapted to their peculiar engagements and prospects. Many of them, it is to be hoped, will be found to have derived much benefit from his precepts and example, and will long remember the singular privileges they enjoyed.

A highly respectable gentleman, warmly attached to Mr. Hall, and fully aware of his admiration of the great John Howe, who "shines in the firmament with preeminent and unrivaled lustre," projected a new edition of his works; and having made some preparation for a new memoir of that celebrated author, solicited Mr. Hall to prefix a prefatory critique. Mr. Hall listened to the proposal, said he would consider of it, and intimated that there were some passages in Howe which would require elucidation; and as a friend of his, whom he was anxious to serve, was provisionally engaged to superintend the printing of this edition, he gave some reason to expect that his

assistance would be given. By the following letter to the intended editor it will be seen, that after much consideration and delay, he was unfortunately compelled to relinquish this important undertaking.

*Bristol, June 24th 1828.*

My dear Friend,

I am happy to inform you that I have found the manuscript you sent me, and have read it with attention. It appears to me to be a highly respectable performance, and the delineation of the character of Howe as a writer is, as far as it goes, very correct and beautiful. I think however, the writer has expressed himself inaccurately in saying, that there is not much of the sublime in the composition of Howe. That he possessed the utmost sublimity of conception, and that it is his leading feature, no one competent to judge can doubt. But he was not a master of the art of composition; and that there is a want of finish in his best passages, must be acknowledged; but as the english language was not yet wrought into elegance, it was the fault of the age, not of the man. The great improvers of english prose were Swift, and Addison, who flourished about fifty years later.

As to what you wish me to do by way of critique on his writings, I feel an insuperable repugnance. There is something perfectly ludicrous in my pretending to give any additional celebrity, by my feeble suffrage; nor in my opinion would it have

any effect in attracting towards them a larger portion of public attention. To the mob of superficial readers he will never be acceptable, while to men of thought and reflection, it would be no less impertinent to recommend him, than to light a farthing candle to show the sun.

I am extremely sorry to find you attach so much importance to this affair: if my declining to comply with your wishes in this particular has been productive of disappointment, I am most sincerely sorry for it. All I have to say in apology is, that I never spoke in such a manner upon the subject as was calculated to excite any sanguine expectation. I wish however I had declined it in a more peremptory manner.

The thought of meeting you at Leicester, or at any other place, would afford me great pleasure, if I could look forward with any confidence to my being able to travel. At present I am obliged to decline it altogether; and unless I experience a great improvement in that respect, I must entirely give up my design of visiting Cambridge in the autumn.

It will always give me the greatest pleasure to hear of you, or from you; and with my earnest prayers that you may be supported through all the trials of this evil and transitory state, and at length be admitted among the spirits of just men made perfect, I remain, my dear friend,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

ROBERT HALL.

Mr. Hall was requested to renew a course of lectures against socinianism, which he had previously delivered at Leicester, but declined it, saying he should not then have entered on the controversy, had not the socinian minister commenced the attack, and his own congregation requested him to make a defence. The truth is that some of the principal persons among the socinians, who occasionally attended at Harvey Lane, had already felt the power of his reasoning, and a fear was entertained that more would follow. But meeting with no opposition of this kind at Bristol, he did not feel it necessary to enter into any lengthened discussion, more especially as the leading advocate of the opposite system had behaved towards him with the utmost candour and politeness.

His venerable friend, Mr. Birt, having urged his attention to the subject, after the publication of his excellent pamphlet on Baptism, Mr. Hall about this time was engaged in a careful examination of the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant, and its connection with the christian dispensation; and some hopes were entertained that his matured thoughts on this interesting topic, which has involved some kindred subjects in so much darkness and perplexity, would have been laid before the public. But whether the unfinished manuscript is still extant or otherwise, has not been stated.

After resisting a number of solicitations from various quarters, to prepare for the press a volume



of his sermons, his friends at Bristol resolved to make a united effort to prevail on Mr. Hall to publish a highly interesting series of practical discourses which he had recently delivered. A respectful requisition to this effect, numerously signed, was presented to him by a deputation of influential gentlemen, but met with only a partial degree of success. Mr. Hall received the deputation very courteously, was much gratified by so handsome a testimonial, and promised to take the subject into serious consideration. A lady afterwards endeavoured, it is said, to revive the recollection of this questionable engagement, by sending him a quantity of pens, ink and paper, but without producing the desired effect; his increasing infirmities rendered so formidable an undertaking nearly impracticable. And having been lacerated by almost incessant excruciating pain the greater part of life, it is no wonder that he published so little, but rather that he wrote so much.

At the same time it is much to be regretted, that no regular attempt was ever made to preserve his discourses as they fell from his lips; nearly all that now remain are a few occasional sketches, which have been or may still be given to the public in an unfinished state. A celebrated shorthand writer attempted some years ago to take down his sermon, but did not succeed, and was of opinion that no one could give an accurately verbal report. A specimen was printed for pri-

vate circulation ; and though it might be known to be one of Mr. Hall's compositions, it still wanted an indescribable something to give it a perfect identity ; it was a statuary likeness, without the charm of the living features. Not only did the rapidity of the speaker and the varied shades of thought render it extremely difficult to follow him, but the electrical effects upon an intelligent auditor would totally unfit him for the undertaking ; he would have enough to do to keep possession of himself, without being able to command any thing like calm abstraction. The same gentleman found very little difficulty in reporting speeches delivered in the senate and at the bar, where a profusion of oratory and a gaudy eloquence may advantageously admit of compression, but here it was far otherwise. Mr. Hall's style had in it so perfect a concatenation that not the smallest link in the chain could be omitted, nor could the same meaning be precisely conveyed in other words. Yet some of the sketches which have more lately appeared, are sufficient to show how much was within the compass of possibility.

Lightly as Mr. Hall esteemed his own productions, which prevented his more frequent appearance in print, he had a great admiration of the talents and piety of other men, and was warm in his commendations. Being in company one day with a minister of preeminent abilities, whose argumentative conversation exceedingly delighted him, he was asked by an aspirant, in a languid

and effeminate tone, who that gentleman was. Mr. Hall sharply replied, "It is Mr. Newton of Witham, sir, whom every *good* man knows." Frequently indeed, his admiration of others was such as not only caused him to lose sight of his own attainments, but possessed him of a feeling which bordered upon dismay. He was unnerved when unexpectedly brought into contact, into comparison, with the justly celebrated Dr. Chalmers, as has already been observed; and numerous other instances of the kind occurred at different periods of his life. His high esteem of Mr. Toller made it difficult for him to preach before him; and when they took an excursion together in visiting some of the congregations, Mr. Hall used to say that his own labours "served only as a foil to the superior efforts of his friend," whose preaching melted him into tears, till it came to his turn to make similar impressions on the mind of his fellow labourer, who well knew how to appreciate his superior abilities. After he removed to Bristol, and became acquainted with the excellent Mr. Leifchild, he entertained similar sentiments of veneration and esteem; and on one occasion, after preaching in connection with his friend, he was heard to say that his own discourse was in comparison so inferior, that "contempt itself could not sink low enough to reach it." Similar convictions of inferiority attended him at a much earlier period of life, when engaged in a public service with Mr. Cochin of Halifax, Mr. Langdon of Leeds, and

other ministers. Part of this feeling might arise from constitutional diffidence, but as it is not common to men of his high intellectual order, a close analysis of this part of his character would afford considerable interest ; it shows a mind of unusual texture, and an unusual affection also for what is beautiful in holiness. He seemed not to hear as a critic, but as a christian ; mere talents vanished into air ; he was penetrated, awed and delighted, with the unction and pathos of the preacher, and cherished those devout emotions which the sermon was calculated to excite.

Dr. Channing of Boston having been called the American Robert Hall, on account of a supposed similarity of style in these two eminent writers, the author of these sheets was anxious to know Mr. Hall's opinion on the subject, and received from him the following letter in reply, containing also expressions of devout gratitude for all the mercies which were mingled with his deep affliction.

*Bristol, Feb. 6th 1829.*

My dear Friend,

Be assured it ever gives me the highest pleasure to hear from you, although I am aware how little I deserve that favour, by my negligence in writing in return. It is not often indeed that I can write ; but being easier this morning than usual, though after a very bad night, I avail myself of the opportunity to send a few lines.



Nothing very particular has occurred at Bristol of late worth communicating. My health has been very bad, though I have through mercy seldom been interrupted in my work, which I hope has not been entirely without fruit. We have already added thirty during the last year, and have now six candidates for baptism, and our congregation is very flourishing. I may truly say, in grateful acknowledgment of a kind providence, 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.' Nothing can exceed the kindness and respect I meet with from every class of my hearers. When I view myself, and retrace the conduct of providence towards me, I stand astonished at the goodness of God to one of the most undeserving of his creatures.

You pay me a high compliment in comparing me with Channing. I have seen his review of Milton, but not the other work you mention. I confess I see no sort of resemblance in our style of writing. Channing is a man of great force and comprehension of mind, but his taste in composition is not good. He is always upon the stilts; there is a sort of forced and inflated manner about him, with an entire absence of amenity and grace; in short he is adapted to astonish rather than to please. I do not mean to insinuate that I possess what I consider him as wanting, but have merely taken the liberty of pointing out his defects. There is nothing classic in the compositions of Channing.

I exceedingly regret the interruption of personal intercourse with you, but I am so utterly incapacitated for travelling, that I sometimes fear we shall meet no more.

I remain, my dear sir, yours most affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

Mr. Hall paid his last visit to Cambridge in September 1829, but continued very unwell the greater part of the time. "He suffered more," says an intelligent correspondent, "than I ever saw him before, from pain in the back, in consequence of which his spirits were not generally good, and he was obliged to have recourse to such quantities of opium that he was much indisposed for company. Occasionally however his conversation was exceedingly characteristic and interesting. Considering his sufferings, he preached with extraordinary vigour. One or two of his discourses were equal, and one, certainly superior, to any thing I ever heard from him at any period of his life." His preaching gathered together as usual a crowded and attentive auditory, among whom were several dignitaries of the university, a number of noblemen and gentlemen commoners, barristers and clergymen, who were captivated with his eloquence, and deeply moved by the power of his arguments.

An evening party having been formed, in order to enjoy his conversation, he unbosomed himself with his accustomed freedom; for though at no

time did he obtrude his remarks on the reluctant ear, or an insensible auditor, he felt great pleasure in meeting the enquiries of the pious and intelligent, and was perfectly at ease in their society. When in health and spirits his conversation possessed a fascinating character, combining the strength of Johnson with a vigour of imagination peculiar to himself. “ Playful as a child in the moments of relaxation, he could enter at will into the profoundest investigation, or discuss the most intricate points with logical force and precision, or invest religious topics in their native dignity and beauty. His vast and various knowledge ever at his command, enabled him, without the formality of teaching, to impart instruction in the most delightful manner,” and no one could leave his company without having enjoyed an unusual degree of satisfaction. In the present instance his conversation, in consequence of much recent indisposition, did not partake of so much vivacity as at other times, but the acuteness and discrimination of his remarks on books and authors cannot fail to be amusing and interesting.

In the course of the evening his opinion was asked respecting the *style* and manner apparent in the writings of Mrs. Hannah More. To which he replied, “ Her style is exceedingly faulty : it exhibits a constant affectation of point. She follows Dr. Johnson’s rule, about contrast, much too far ; fatigues one with perpetual antitheses ; and that not of ideas, but of words.”

“ I consider Miss Edgeworth’s style infinitely superior. She is simple and elegant, content to convey her ideas in the most simple and natural form. This is indeed the perfection of style. As that piece of glass is the most perfect, through which objects are so distinctly seen, that the medium, the glass itself, is not perceived ; so that style is the most perfect, which exhibits the idea so clearly as to make itself forgotten. This is very much the character of Miss Edgeworth’s style.”

Some one present having asked his opinion of the moral tendency of Miss Edgeworth’s works, Mr. Hall remarked, “ She is the most irreligious writer I ever read, sir ; not so much from any direct attacks she makes on religion, as from a universal and studied omission of the subject. In her writings you meet with a high strain of morality. She delineates the most virtuous characters, and represents them in the most affecting circumstances in life ; in distress, in sickness, and even in the immediate prospect of eternity, and finally sends them off the stage with their virtue unimpaired ; and all this without the remotest allusion to religion. She does not directly oppose religion, but makes it appear unnecessary, by exhibiting a perfect virtue without it. No works ever produced so bad an effect on my own mind. I did not expect to find any irreligion in Miss Edgeworth’s writings. I was off my guard—their moral character disarmed me. I read, sir, nine volumes of them at once ; but I could not preach with any



comfort for six weeks after reading them. I never felt so little ardour in my profession, or so little interest in religion. She was once called to account for the character of her works, and asked her reasons for representing a mere ideal morality, without attributing any influence to religion. She said that if she had written for the lower classes, she should have recommended religion; but that she had written for a class to whom it was less necessary. How absurd, sir! She seemed to think that the virtues of the higher orders of society needed no assistance from religion, and that it was only designed as a curb and a muzzle for the brute."

Yet the writings of this lady have been highly applauded by the generality of reviewers, not merely for their taste and elegance, but forsooth, for their excellent moral tendency and usefulness! "For nearly forty years," says a writer in Tait's Magazine, "she has held the envied place of the most high and popular of the fair preachers of the fashionable world; and unlike most other dignitaries, she has been, beyond all doubt, the most useful and practical." The Edinburgh reviewers are also "tempted to envy Miss Edgeworth, not so much for her fine discrimination of character, as for the delightful consciousness of having done more good than any other writer, male or female, of her generation!" The religious public will know how to value these opposite statements, and what confidence ought to be placed in the judgment and commendations of mere literary men, who feel

little or no interest in the great principles of revealed religion.

After this topic had been discussed, one of the company enquired, whether there was any thing distinguishable in the manner of Mrs. Hannah More's *conversation*. Mr. Hall immediately replied, "She talks but little sir, on ordinary occasions; and when she speaks, it is generally to make some pointed sententious remark. Indeed sir, she seems to be always lying in wait for such opportunities. The last time I was in her company she spoke but once, and then some one complained how long in the summer genteel people remained in London, and how little of it they spent in the country. Another accounted for it by saying they did not leave town, from a principle of loyalty, till after the celebration of the king's birthday. 'Then,' said Mrs. More, 'the wickedest thing that George iii. ever did, was being born on the 4th of June.' This sir, continued Mr. Hall, was the only sentence she uttered all the evening." On being asked whether there was any thing particularly striking in the *manners* of this excellent lady, he replied, "Nothing striking, ma'am, certainly not. Her manners are too perfectly proper to be striking. Striking manners are bad manners, you know, ma'am. She is a perfect lady, and studiously avoids all those eccentricities which constitute striking manners."

In the course of the evening the supposed author of Junius's Letters became a topic of con-

versation. Mr. Hall remarked that “there was some most extraordinary circumstantial evidence to prove, that Sir Philip Francis was the author of those letters. It is evident indeed that they passed through his hands; but he could not have written them, sir. It is truly a mysterious affair. How strange, that so distinguished a writer as Junius should not have betrayed himself, in some other of his productions.”

Dr. Johnson’s remark was mentioned, that he knew no man capable of writing them but Edmund Burke. Mr. Hall said, “he certainly could *not* have written them. The style of the two authors is too opposite for any one to believe them identical. The talent of Junius is condensation and brevity. Burke’s forte is amplification. Junius is cool and deliberate: Burke impassioned and energetic. Junius is remarkable for his caustic satire: Burke for rampant and violent abuse. The diction of Burke is modern and latinized. On the other hand, the writing of Junius affords a singular illustration of the force and excellence of the original English language. He uses no latinized words, and has composed a full and forcible style, of words almost entirely of Saxon derivation. Their works could not have been written by the same hand: the man who could write as Burke did, could not disguise his style to any similarity with Junius. How much more effective is such satire as that of Junius, than that of Burke: and for an obvious reason. The subject of such vitu-

peration as that of Burke's has the consolation of supposing, that his expressions of reproach are prompted by the tumultuous feelings of the moment, and not dictated by deliberate reflection. On the contrary, the sarcasms of Junius, from the appearance they exhibit of dispassionate examination, together with the profound acquaintance with human nature they show, carry with them a conviction of their truth. Horne Tooke was a singular example of this species of satire: his very calmness was irresistible."

Barrow's sermons having been noticed with great admiration by some one, Mr. Hall assented very coolly. "He is very imperfect as a preacher, sir. His sermons are fine lectures on moral philosophy; but they might have been heard by any man for years together, without his receiving any just views of his situation as a sinner, or any comprehensive knowledge of the leading doctrines of the gospel. All his appeals were directed to one faculty: he only addressed himself to the understanding, he left the affections and emotions untouched. Hence, from one faculty being kept in constant and exclusive exercise, he is read with extreme fatigue. I never could read his productions long together." One in the company said, But you must allow sir, that he exhausts his subject. "Yes, he does that completely sir, and his reader also at the same time."

A little while before this interview, a person lent Mr. Hall the Four Orations of a Scotch



preacher, not long since very popular in London, with a view of eliciting his opinion. Nothing was easier than to persuade him that he was greatly inferior to the popular ministers of the day; and its having been hinted that these orations had been highly commended for their eloquence, he felt some reluctance in stating his opinion, lest it should be attributed to a feeling of jealousy towards such a rival! However, he at length said, "If these orations are really eloquent, we are all wrong; our standard of eloquence is wrong; all the great masters are wrong. Demosthenes, Cicero, Fox, Burke, Sheriden, were all mistaken." In another conversation, when noticing the grotesque style of this miltonic writer, he said the author appeared as ludicrous as a young lad strutting about with his grandfather's breeches on.

Mr. Hall continued his last visit to Cambridge longer than he intended, in consequence of the alarming illness of Mrs. Hall. He was impatiently expected in London on his return, but was obliged to go by short stages across the country to Bristol, where it was soon perceived that the close of his valuable life and labours was fast approaching.

The style and manner of his preaching, his appearance in the pulpit, and the eagerness with which his ministry was attended at Bristol, where he found an enlightened auditory and a wide range for the exercise of his abilities, are all so admirably depicted by an impartial witness, one of another denomination, that the reader will be gratified with

an abstract of this graphical description, interspersed with a few additional remarks.

No sooner, says this writer, did he make his appearance in the crowd usually collected along the aisles and to the pulpit door, than the confusion which the assembling of multitudes generally occasions, immediately subsided. As he moved slowly, solemnly, and modestly along, through the yielding pressure, laden with the treasures of heavenly truth, the contrasted majesty of his aspect, even where talented ranks had marshalled, was so striking and peculiar, that those who saw him only for the first time required no whisperer to say, that one of the greatest of human beings was there; one for whom every individual felt it a personal concern to maintain a silence profound and awful.

His deportment in the pulpit was solemn, like one wholly absorbed in his subject, and duly sensible of its infinite importance. Nothing appeared to disturb his meditation, and every movement indicated his awful sense of the divine presence. His eyes never wandered, and were often shut. Prayer was his element; and when engaged in conducting the great congregation to the mercy seat, his overawed spirit trembled through words to which, especially in this exercise, the feebleness of his voice gave an additional charm. Simplicity and earnestness were the grand characteristics of these public intercessions; and they were eminently adapted to excite a tone of feeling suited to the occasion. Of no man may it more truly be

said, that he wrestled with God in prayer; and seasons have been known in which his whole soul was so absorbed in this holy exercise, that he seemed to be unconscious of any other presence, even when interseding for those around him, than that of God and himself. A stranger, a pious clergyman, once spent a sabbath at Leicester, and afterwards remarked that he had often heard of Mr. Hall's preaching, but he was still more astonished at his praying, and had never witnessed in any other man such an effusion of the spirit of grace and of supplication.

When he rose to speak the assembly was hushed into silence, and became breathless with expectation. The text of his discourse was announced in a feeble tone and in a rapid manner, so as frequently to be inaudible to a great part of the congregation. He then introduced the general topic in a calm perspicuous statement, remarkable chiefly for its simplicity and elegance, and occasionally not calculated to give a stranger any extraordinary promise; it was marked by no effort, and often consisted of an exposition of the context, or a few plain remarks. Sometimes at the commencement he hesitated and seemed perplexed, as if dissatisfied with what he intended to say, and several sentences would be interrupted by a sympathetic cough, rather voluntarily indulged to create a pause, in order to recover his recollection. An inconsiderate writer has mistaken this for an "impediment in his voice;" he had no impediment

but what arose from the circumstance just mentioned. He frequently commenced his discourse with some important sentiment, which fixed the attention of the hearer at once, making the rest of the discourse a continued developement of a train of thought, which became every moment more conspicuous as he proceeded in a course of close and convincing argumentation.

He had no oratorical action, and scarcely any motion, except an occasional lifting or waving of the right hand, and in his most impassioned moments an alternate retreat and advance in the pulpit. Sometimes the pain in his back, to which he was so great a martyr, would induce him to throw his arm behind, as if to give himself ease or support in the long continued, and to him, afflictive position of standing to address the people. As he proceeded he encreased in animation and strength of utterance; in his application of the principle he had advanced he grew more intense and ardent; and when he had risen to a certain pitch of holy excitement, his finely arched brow would expand, his countenance brighten, and throwing back his majestic form in the pulpit, he would come forward again, charged with the fullness of his message, and address his hearers in tones and language which made every heart vibrate. It was not with his lips only that he spoke; his eloquence was more intellectual and spiritual than audible sounds could make it. His speaking eye told volumes, whether beaming with benignity,



or lighted with intelligence, or blazing with deep and hallowed feeling; that eye indicated sentiments and emotions which words were not made to express. It is impossible indeed fully to describe the impression which many of his most powerful sermons produced; the glow, the rapture, the delight with which they were heard, the breathless silence which prevailed in the assembly, so that even the ticking of the clock became an awful sound. His appeals were beyond measure affecting, and his pleadings most urgent. With all the disadvantages of a weak voice, and sometimes with a rapid and hurried utterance, he soared to the greatest heights of human eloquence, and carried his hearers with him as by an irresistible impulse, and induced in many of them an aspiration after the same heaven to which he was tending, and an admiration of the same God and Saviour whom he loved and adored.

Mr. Hall's earnestness of manner attended him in all his public administrations, and gave him an immense advantage over the feelings of his hearers. They saw that he had something to communicate to them of surpassing interest, something which had absorbed his whole soul, and in which their own safety and happiness were deeply involved. Whether he warned the impenitent, or counselled the faithful; whether he urged the sinner to flee from the wrath to come, or the saint to persevere in his heavenly course; whether he directed the self-condemned to the blood of atonement, or

cheered the fainting spirit with the promises of the gospel; whether he wielded the thunders of the law, or whispered the mild accents of merciful invitation, or exhorted his hearers in general that with full purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord; he appeared to be equally in earnest, equally intent upon doing good, and making a right impression on all who heard him. He evidently spoke from the heart and as in the presence of God, while nothing trifling or irrelevant escaped him to diminish the effect of such an impression.

The rich variety which pervaded his discourses was quite as remarkable as their other characteristics. Those who heard him once or twice, or twenty times only, could form but a very imperfect conception of it; while his regular and constant hearers who attended him through a long course, were struck beyond measure by the exhibition of a power which seemed inexhaustible. It was displayed not only in the great diversity of topics which he discussed or elucidated, but in his manner of treating them. The same truths which had previously been exhibited in one form, or for some specific purpose, would be viewed from another position, or presented in a new aspect or a new light, or it would be drawn from a different source and by a varied process, or placed in new associations, and applied to the ever-shifting scenes of human life and christian experience. His extensive knowledge was always at command; he could range at will through all the regions of

thought that are accessible to men ; and collecting fresh treasures in every excursion, bring all his acquisitions to bear upon the great objects of his ministry. He was not a loiterer in the service of his Lord, but a diligent and laborious occupier of the talents committed to him. He read much, thought much, and prayed much ; his power of observation was continually in exercise ; and hence, like a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, he brought out of his rich and capacious stores, things new and old for the edifying of the church. It was this, more than anything else, that gave such encreasing interest to his regular addresses.

With these resplendent powers of mind thus cultivated, and the finest moral and social qualities, was combined in Mr. Hall a spirit of fervent piety towards God, which gave expansion to his soul and a finish to his character. It was in him, as in every true believer, not a momentary flash or a fluctuating impulse, but a commanding and permanent principle, influencing alike his thoughts, his determinations and his conduct. It was his delight to retire frequently in the course of the day, from mortal scenes and secular cares, to seek intercourse with God, to raise his devout soul to intimate and living communion with him. Few men have spent more time in private devotion, or resorted to it with more relish, or had a deeper practical conviction of its benefits and its pleasures, as well as of its obligation as a duty binding upon

all. To this practice may be traced much of that profound humility in the sight of God which displayed itself in his public ministrations, but which was more distinctly and affectingly visible to those who had the nearest access to him in private. In the presence of infinite purity he felt and bewailed the sinfulness and imperfections of his nature ; before the throne of the Eternal he considered himself less than nothing and vanity, and yet elevated by the mercy and grace of God to a union with himself, and even to a participation of the divine nature.

That the usefulness of one so richly gifted should have been limited by bodily infirmities, and interrupted by afflictions, is one of the mysteries of providence which eternity only can explain. Independently however of benefits received by those who were the stated attendants upon his ministrations, several important ends have been answered by the life and labours of this extraordinary man. It is seen that the most acute and powerful intellect, improved in the highest degree by learning and knowledge, and the finest and most correct taste, are perfectly consistent, not only with a general belief of christianity, but with a steady adherence to the most mysterious of its doctrines, and with a life of experimental and practical godliness ; a consideration which is calculated to make a salutary impression upon the youthful mind. An exclusive reliance on the sacrifice of Christ and sensible communion with God, maintained by fervent



persevering devotion, may be denominated enthusiasm and fanaticism by profane witlings; but in Mr. Hall they were seen in union with a mind of such power, discrimination and purity, as neither infidelity nor socinianism can exhibit in the whole range of their disciples. The most commanding instances of human authority, as well as the testimony of inspired writ, are all on the side of evangelical religion. It is no common blessing that God has conferred upon his church, in exhibiting to the view of its ministers an example so holy and elevated, a man of almost superhuman powers receiving the gospel of God with the meekness and docility of a child, thoroughly imbibing its spirit, and preaching it in the midst of torturing pain with a zeal, an energy, and a glow of heavenly feeling, that were never exceeded.\*

Mr. Hall's usefulness must have been very considerable, fully equal if not superior to that of any of his contemporaries. To say nothing of the edification and comfort which numberless individuals derived from his labours, nothing of the able support he yielded to the cause of truth, and to the interests of religion generally; there is every reason to believe that, under God, his ministry was blessed to the conversion of some hundreds, who will be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus, and that his writings will descend like the dew of heaven on generations yet unborn.

\* Wesleyan Magazine, May 1831.

## SECTION XXVI.

A. D. 1830, 1831.

THE few remaining months of Mr. Hall's life witnessed the progress of disease, and gave warning to all about him that the time of his departure was at hand. In addition to the acute pain which he had suffered from his youth up, he became subject to frequent spasmodic attacks in the chest, brought on, it is believed, by his extreme anxiety about leaving Leicester. These were also attended with sudden fits of difficult breathing, arising from a languid circulation, and produced a most terrific agony, a feeling of impending dissolution in one of its severest forms. His distress was sometimes so great that he was heard to say, during and after an attack, that he could more easily suffer seven years of continued pain in the back, acute as it was, than one half-hour of the conflict within his chest ; and he always expressed a confidence, that if the attacks were to recur frequently, he should not be able long to survive, or what he most dreaded, he should be prevented from preaching, and be laid aside in a state of great affliction to himself, and of distress to his family.

Yet amidst all this torture he continued his ministry, without much interruption, nearly to the very last, rising superior to pain, and even deriving from it additional excitements to zeal and ardour, and poured forth some of the richest strains of eloquence that ever proceeded from his lips. Nor was it less evident that his personal piety was greatly advanced by his deep affliction, which gave occasion to a brighter display of the christian graces, of patient resignation, and general sympathy with the sufferings of others.

In March 1830 he had an alarming seizure, in the vestry at Broadmead, which prevented his entering the pulpit, and compelled him to return home. From that time especially the disease was visibly advancing, and with a rapidity that indicated an approaching crisis. The ordinary symptoms kept their course until the evening of the following new-year's day, when, after having delivered in the morning an unusually solemn address on the uncertainty of life, he had a series of violent paroxysms, from which he recovered after being bled, and then took part in the conversation of his friends where he was visiting.

The progress of the disease had been affectingly visible for several months, nor was it less apparent, from indications of another sort, that he was not long to be an inhabitant of earth. Though at all times remarkable for his spirituality, for tenderness and lowliness of heart, his devotional exercises partook a still higher degree of holy fervour,

both in the family and in the church ; his intercessions and supplications on behalf of others were expressed with such minuteness and propriety, with such affection and delicacy of feeling, as manifested his intercourse with and near approaches to the unseen world. The hearts of all his friends, while deeply affected with these prophetic intimations, and the prospect of their final loss, cleaved to him so much the more, as did Elisha to the ascending prophet, and felt that the loss of his intercession with heaven would if possible be greater than the loss of his public ministry. There was now also a remarkable advance in godly simplicity, in all his communications, such a finish to his general character, in all that is amiable and dignified in true religion, as to make it evident that he was soon to be translated to the kingdom of glory.

By the advice of his medical friends he resorted to Cheltenham, about the end of the year, and thought he derived considerable relief from the waters, though he then found great difficulty in breathing, and had frequent spasms in the chest. A friend who visited him from Leicester was much struck with his altered appearance, and anticipated the result.

The two last sermons Mr. Hall delivered in January 1831, after his return from Cheltenham, were intended to promote a collection for liquidating a debt remaining on a small place of worship, which had been erected some years before in a very benighted part of the city, and been supplied



by the students at Bristol academy. The erection had its origin in the zealous efforts of Mr. John Chamberlain, afterwards the energetic and highly successful missionary, in connection with the brethren at Serampore. While a student at Bristol, Dr. Ryland acknowledged that he had not had under his care any one who had displayed so much ardour, or acquired learning with so much facility, as the lad taken from the plough in Naseby field; but Chamberlain being already deeply imbued with a missionary spirit, and a total stranger to discipline, was with difficulty restrained within the sober limits of college rules. He saw with pious emotion the irreligion and profligacy which prevailed among the neglected and degraded part of the population, and could not understand how any prudential regulations should be allowed to interfere with a sense of duty, nor why he should wait for a commission to attempt a little good, while such multitudes were perishing for lack of knowledge. If any were converted from the error of their way, and souls were saved from death, he uncanonically believed that no divine law would be violated. He therefore rushed into the streets, not with a flaming censer, but with a wooden stool, on which he perched himself at any convenient place, where he could gather around him a number of the poorer class, and ‘show unto them the way of salvation.’ Others of the students afterwards followed in his steps, and preached to small companies in private dwellings, till it was judged

expedient to build a place of worship for their accommodation, to be supplied on the sabbath by the students, who would by this means have an opportunity of exercising their gifts for the ministry. To an object so congenial with his devout and benevolent feelings, Mr. Hall had the singular satisfaction of consecrating his last public services, just before he entered into the temple made without hands, eternal in the heavens.

During this exercise however, a new symptom made its appearance, which though but slightly noticed, was regarded by some as prognostic of some approaching change. While reading the scriptures from the pulpit he found unusual difficulty in pronouncing two or three syllables, or giving them their proper sound. A few days afterward the same difficulty occurred in conversation, when he was repeatedly obliged to substitute one word for another, and seemed a little embarrassed. This circumstance excited no immediate alarm, and the hope was still cherished that his days might be lengthened out.

Mr. Hall attended a meeting of the church at Broadmead on the 9th of February, which was his last appearance in public. His concluding prayer on that occasion is said to have been singularly spiritual and elevated, diffusing a heavenly influence on all around him. At the close he retired, never more to meet on earth his beloved flock.

Next day, Feb. 10th, Mr. Hall was attacked with a severe paroxysm, which prevented his

preaching the usual sermon, preparatory to the administration of the Lord's supper on the following sabbath. He appeared as well as usual in the forepart of the day, and had this seizure while in his study, preparing for the evening service. He sustained it for some time, hoping it might subside; but on attempting at length to come down to the parlour, the symptoms were greatly aggravated by the exertion, which compelled him to remain half an hour on the stairs before he was able to proceed. He had endured the whole of this paroxysm alone, hoping he should recover without alarming his domestics, or disappointing the congregation; and had not some of the family discovered his painful situation, it is probable no one would have been aware of its occurrence.

For some time previous to his last illness Mr. Hall had evinced a peculiar anxiety respecting the poorer part of his flock, and had publicly expressed his concern that they did not make themselves more familiar, by giving him more frequent invitations; telling them that he should feel even greater pleasure in visiting them than others, who could afford him more substantial entertainment. He also requested a friend to inform him of any that were in trouble or affliction, expressing at the same time his intention of visiting such more assiduously, though he was never known to withhold his sympathy from any that were in distress. The intensity of his feeling on this occasion was probably produced by the grateful sense he enter-

tained of his own comforts, under suffering and declining health; and though unable to walk much, he went in a light car to visit all classes of the congregation. Reviving a little from this severe attack, which was of unusual duration, his conversation became remarkably calm and tender, and flowed in a strain of the most unaffected humility.

Lord's day morning, Feb. 13th, it was found that he had passed a dreadful night of suffering, from pain in the back and agony in the chest, both combined, and had had recourse to unusual doses of opium in vain. He was now sunk and dejected to an alarming degree, yet still possessing undeviating composure of mind. There was no murmuring, no repining, no irritable expression, but a patient endurance of the most aggravated sufferings. To a friend who visited him in this state he said, "Oh my dear sir, I have suffered intense agony, but I have received unspeakable mercies—mercies unspeakable, unspeakable. I am the chief of sinners, and yet I have received the most abundant mercies." For many hours during the day he suffered dreadfully, feeling as if he could not long survive. Towards evening the violence of the pain abated; but being unable to exert himself without exciting a paroxysm, it became necessary to prepare a bed for him in the parlour, whence he was never more to pass, till borne by his afflicted people to the tomb.

Mr. Hall was much relieved on Monday, but



remained exceedingly weak. On Tuesday he was still more revived, and hopes were entertained that he might possibly survive this attack, as the paroxysms had frequently before subsided. Mr. Hall even spoke of preaching the next Lord's day, saying he thought he should be able, but should only attempt it once; and his friends also indulged the hope that in the intervening five days he might again be strengthened. His medical advisers, who saw danger approaching, could not participate in this hope, though when one of them entered the room Mr. Hall rose and met him so much in his usual manner, as for a moment to suppress their apprehensions.

The same evening he remarked in the course of conversation, "How thankful I am that I came to Bristol: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." On another occasion he said, "How great are the sufferings of the poor. I have received and enjoyed many mercies: many are the privations of the poor." He then added, that "if he should recover, he would endeavour to see them oftener; that he would find them out, and it was proper they should be found out;—Blessed is he that considereth the poor." He also spoke of the pleasure he anticipated of meeting many of them in the vestry at Broadmead, agreeably to a plan he had lately formed, and mentioned several of them affectionately by name.

On Wednesday he was evidently not so well; and on Thursday his attacks augmented, both in

frequency and in force. He this day expressed his doubts whether he should preach the next Lord's day, and that he did not know whether he should ever preach again, but that he remained in the Lord's hand, was thankful that it was so, not doubting but he would do every thing for the best. He then said, "I am God's creature, at his disposal, and that is a great mercy."

On Friday in reply to a friend who sat up with him through the night, he said, "I have not one anxious thought, either for life or death. What I dread most are dark days. I have not had any yet. I hope I shall not have them."

On Saturday evening, he had a more violent attack than any of the preseding; during which his streaming but nearly ice-cold perspirations, and respiratory heavings, threatened the most imminent danger. From this state however he was gradually recovered, but remained a long time much exhausted. His voice was very feeble, often inaudible; but when heard it was generally to express his thanks to one and another of his family and friends for their attentions. On one occasion he remarked, "You have been very kind to me; your attentions have been most exemplary. I can never reward you. I hope you will have your reward at the resurrection of the just."

At night he seemed to sleep tranquilly till one o'clock, when his chest began to heave, and he sprang out of bed to obtain some relief from a standing posture. Almost immediately after gaining

his usual position near the fire, a seizure of great severity, threatening to be suddenly fatal, succeeded. Becoming for a few moments insensible, bathed in cold perspirations, and pulseless, he sank down, supported by his medical attendant, who feared he would never rise again. But having with difficulty been placed on his feet, he recovered his recollection, and was supported by his friend through an hour of intense suffering. In answer to an enquiry, after being a little recovered, he said that his sufferings were great; but added, "What are my sufferings, to the sufferings of Christ. His sufferings were infinitely greater, and were complicated. God has been very merciful to me, very merciful. I am a poor creature, an unworthy creature; but God has been very kind, very merciful." He again spoke of the sufferings of Christ, of his enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, of the ingratitude and unkindness he received from those for whom he went about doing good, of the combination of mental and corporeal agonies sustained on the cross, the length of time during the crucifixion, and the exhaustion it occasioned; and again reverted to the lightness of his own sufferings, contrasted with the sufferings of Christ. He then observed that a contemplation of Christ's sufferings was the best antidote against impatience under any troubles we might experience, any pain or distress, or in expectation of death itself.

Notwithstanding the nature of his disorder tended

greatly to depress his spirits, he remarked that at this time he felt composed and tranquil, and deliberately said, that if it were the divine will he would rather go than stay; that while there were reasons which might lead him to desire life, there were others which he had carefully considered, and he thought he could say with certainty, he would rather go. Soon afterwards he remarked, "I fear pain more than death. If I could die easily, I think I would rather die than live longer; for I have seen enough of the world, and I have a humble hope." On being reminded that his life was desirable for farther usefulness, he replied that at his time of life it was scarcely probable he should recover from such an attack to be of much use; and in general there was nothing he feared more, than being laid aside from usefulness in the decline of life.

On Lord's day morning, after having a little repose, a friend said to him, "This God will be our God for ever and ever," he immediately responded, "Yes he will, and will be our guide even unto death: yes he will never forsake." After sustaining another severe paroxysm, he expressed his regret that he should not be able to preach that day; to which it was replied that it was more the duty of the church to pray for him, than his to preach to them. He answered, "Perhaps so. I hope they will pray for me. It is my particular request, that if any persons should enquire for me, they may be requested to pray for me." In the morning



service at Broadmead the officiating minister received a note, soliciting the prayers of the congregation for their dying pastor. The afternoon sermon was omitted, and a meeting held for the purpose of commending him to God, when prayers and supplications with many tears were offered up by his affectionate people, till it became a scene of audible weeping. Its being mentioned to him in the evening that special prayer had been offered on his behalf, Mr. Hall expressed great pleasure, saying "I am glad of it, very glad of it. I am glad for their sakes, as well as my own." He was much gratified with this expression of sympathy, and considered the spirit of prayer among the people as the best evidence of their state.

Towards night there was a great alteration; his strength failed, and his countenance changed. Afterwards he was a little revived; he had a few seizures in the night, but comparatively slight. He repeated nearly the whole of Robinson's hymn, 'Come thou fount of every blessing;' but his voice faltered towards the end of the last verse. Great as his sufferings were he hoped he had uttered no complaint, and said he had no reason to complain.

Monday morning, Feb. 21st, Mr. Hall seemed more composed, said he had had a merciful night, and expressed an anxious concern for the personal comfort of his friends and attendants, whose kindness was invariably outdone by his grateful and affectionate solicitude on their behalf. He soon began however to experience a more constant pain

in his chest, and greater difficulty of breathing; but remained tolerably free from more violent distress. To one of the family full of anxiety he said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; then all other things will be added. He will never leave you, he will never forsake you." About noon he seemed altogether better, wished to leave his bed, where he had continued for three days, to be dressed and to recline upon the sofa; but there was evidently an increased difficulty in breathing.

Before two o'clock his difficulty of breathing suddenly increased, attended with a dreadful and final paroxysm. Hoping to find some relief he rose more on his elbow, then to an upright posture, to place his feet in hot water, the usual means resorted to in all these attacks. One of the family observing his eyes to be fixed, with an unusual expression on his countenance, and in his whole manner, became alarmed, and exclaimed in great agitation, "This can't be dying!" The expiring saint replied, "It is death—it is death—death. Oh the sufferings of this body!"

His medical attendant entered the room, found him in this situation, sitting on the sofa, surrounded with his sorrowful family, his frame waving with convulsive heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution; and when offered a little stimulant medicine, he said, "All will now be useless. I am dying—death is come at last." On being asked whether he suffered much he replied, "dread-

fully." Still gasping for life he had no power to speak, except in a few monosyllables; but there was no failure of his mental vigour or composure. So perfect was his consciousness, that with his accustomed courteousness he expressed a fear lest he should fatigue his medical friend, on whom he leaned during his last agonies; and when his family one after another, gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathising looks, as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. In answer to a previous enquiry as to the state of his mind, he said he was "very comfortable—very comfortable;" and then exclaimed, "Come, Lord Jesus—come." A general convulsion soon followed, and he quickly expired, February 21st 1831, in the sixty seventh year of his age.

The concluding reflections of his medical friend, to whose pamphlet we are chiefly indebted for the above extracts, are so striking and appropriate that we cannot forbear quoting them in this place. "It is not in my power," he says, "adequately to represent the solemn and awful grandeur of this last scene. Our beloved pastor died from a failure of the vital powers of the heart, amidst the most vigorous energies of consciousness and volition; his placidity and complacency of spirit being in striking contrast with the wild and powerful convulsions of a frame yielding in its full strength. The last struggle was violent, but short. The pains of dying were extreme, but they were borne with

genuine christian magnanimity. Peacefully he closed those brilliant eyes, which had so often beamed upon us with benignity and intellectual fire. Calmly, yet firmly, he sealed those lips which had so often charmed our ears with messages of grace and mercy. And as he lay a corpse over my shoulder, he exhibited a countenance combining such peace, benevolence and grandeur, in its silent expressions, as has seldom been witnessed in the dead. Oh what a moment was that, when we paused for his next breath—but it came not—and all was over! Our beloved friend was separated from the flesh. His faith had terminated in sight, and he was present with the Lord. I wished only a glance of him, blessing us, I imagined, as he passed away. But here, as on all other occasions, we must learn to live by faith. All left for us to contemplate were the painful and humiliating facts and consequences which death produced. The lifeless corpse of one so great and mighty, so affectionate and beloved; the failing hearts of the widow and the fatherless, the sobbings and lamentations of friends, the confusion spread through the neighbourhood; all combined to provoke each other's despair under so irreparable a loss. When however he was transferred to his bed, and we gazed upon that more than ordinary composure of feature which our deceased pastor exhibited, we felt the reaction of faith on sensible objects, exhilarating us with the consolatory conviction, that the gain of the departed was, in a sense,



proportioned to the loss felt by the christian church.

I am aware that the closing days of this truly excellent man were not rich in those expressions of sentiment which the eager curiosity of a multitude usually demands ; but it was the manner, the dignified composure of spirit, the unclouded eye of faith, the majestic demeanour of the christian, which spoke what words could not intelligibly communicate, and conveyed more full and satisfactory ideas to the beholders. It has lately been well remarked by an able preacher, that his greatness was lost in his goodness, the scholar in the christian, and the philosopher in the man of God. He rose by descending, his gentleness made him great, and his unaffected simplicity gave him a moral grandeur seldom encircling the brow of a mortal.

Never did our revered pastor present a more softened, a more benignant majesty of deportment, than in the last week of his life. In patience he possessed his soul : with calm solemnity he awaited the coming of his Saviour : with humble but assured hope he longed for the moment when he should be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man. Emptied of self, he was lost in admiring contemplation of the mercies of God, in the great salvation. He was ever backward to speak of himself, or to dilate on his own individual experience. Truly humble and lowly, he saw himself, not as seen and approved of men, but as he actually was in the sight of an all-searching

but merciful God. The closing scenes of his life brought out to view every thing that was excellent, freed from every trace of what might be regarded as corrupting. Every thing alloying seemed to be depositing in the material fabric, ready to be cast off; whilst all that was perfecting appeared to be accumulating in his mind, to fit him for his departure. I have never before seen, and scarcely shall I again witness, a death, in all its circumstances, so grand and impressive; so harmonious with his natural character, so consistent with his spiritual life. Little indeed was said; but the expressions here recorded contained so many allusions and implications, that they will convey much to those who heard him, and who were aware of the circumstances in connection. ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace,’ was fully applicable to our beloved pastor; whilst the words of his Saviour, inaudible to all but himself, were being uttered, ‘Come up hither.’”\*

The late Mr. Mack of Clipstone having been to Cheltenham for the benefit of his health, in the month of December, proceeded on to Bristol, at the urgent request of Mr. Hall, with whom he spent a week or two at his house, delighted with his company and conversation; and shortly after his return, Mr. Mack received the following letter from a correspondent at Bristol, dated Feb. 23rd

\* Authentic Account of the last illness and death of Mr. Hall.  
By J. M. Chandler. 1831.

1831, communicating the mournful intelligence of the illness and death of his beloved friend, with some additional particulars.

I know not, my dear sir, how to tell you what no man will hear with so profound a grief as yourself. To attempt by any circuitous course of words, or array of commonplace, to prepare the mind for what will give it an equal shock, whenever it is learnt, would be labour in vain. I will therefore apprise you at once that Mr. Hall is gone, and shortly detail a few particulars respecting this sad event, which though of little importance in themselves, the depth of your sorrow will cause you to read with great interest.

The Saturday after you left us, being new year's day, a prayer-meeting was held, at which Mr. Hall delivered a solemn and pathetic address. He afterwards dined at Mr. Warren's, where we joined him in the evening. He was seized a little before teatime with pain in the breast. At first he put his feet in warm water, and seemed a little relieved; but the pain returned with fresh violence, and he sent for Mr. Chandler to bleed him. The blood had scarce begun to flow, when he felt better, and in half an hour, just as if he had suffered nothing, he exhibited all his usual interest, spirit and vivacity, in conversation. This was the longest and most violent attack that he had previously had, and he never thoroughly recovered from it.

Next day indeed, he preached twice, with scarcely

more than his usual fatigue. He passed the second week in January at Bath, accompanied with Mrs. Hall, and seemed to enjoy himself. Nothing, save very slight attacks in his chest, was suffered till the 9th of February, when about half an hour before he intended to deliver the monthly discourse, preparatory to the Lord's supper, he felt the pain in his breast, which he expected soon to pass away, and endeavoured to conceal it from his family, but was obliged to make it known, and was unable to perform the service. I saw him after the meeting: he was very pale and languid, but quite expected to preach on the following sabbath. But it was otherwise ordained by the great Disposer: his work was done.

On the Friday and Saturday, he suffered unusual paroxysms of pain, and took, even for him, extraordinary quantities of opium. Next day he seemed to labour under the effects of the medicine, and at the same time he had a fearful attack in the chest. On the three following days he was thought to be much better; the attacks were frequent, but not violent. There was however a dreadful recurrence of the disorder in the afternoon of Thursday, and also of Saturday. His life was considered to be in great danger. On Lord's day again, and the earlier part of Monday, he was pronounced better. Flattering hopes were entertained of restoration to active service, at least for a time. The countenance of his family and friends began to put on a smile. He partook of the delu-



sion, and considered himself so much better that he would be shaved and dressed, which had not been done for several days.

All this was deceptive ; he was seized before three o'clock on Monday afternoon with an awful deadly paroxysm, and was in an agony of pain. In about half an hour he said, " This is death." When his attendants pressed him with liquids to repress the violence of the disorder, he said " It is all over—all too late." During the conflict he seemed to be in the attitude of prayer. A few minutes before his departure he was heard to say, " Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Throughout the whole of his illness, our departed friend, though he viewed the issue as uncertain, appeared to indulge considerable hopes of recovery. I saw him for a short time on Saturday, when he said, " The result is very precarious. But it is useless to be anxious, and indeed I do not feel any anxiety. What poor frail creatures we are." He told Mrs. Hall to " hope for the best, and prepare for the worst." It was his frequent expression, " I am not afraid of death, but I fear pain—I have a humble hope." Throughout the whole of his sufferings his mind was tranquil and resigned ; his faculties retained their clearness and vigour to the very last. Our ornament and pride alas are gone !

Extract of a letter from another correspondent at Bristol, dated Feb. 26th 1831, giving a brief

account of the closing scene of Mr. Hall's life, with some circumstantial variation—

After little more than a week's severe illness, and the most excruciating pain, under which he was divinely supported, his exhausted frame yielded to the incessant shocks of mortality. He died in peace, at half past four in the afternoon of Monday last. It would deeply affect you to know the fiery trial he had to endure; yet, though quickly sensible to pain as he had shown himself to be on all occasions, not a single murmur escaped his lips. He was repeatedly attacked by paroxysms of a truly terrific nature; and from their commencement he would not be removed from the back parlour, where he had first laid himself down on the sofa. On Monday afternoon a dreadful seizure came on, which threw the family into frantic distress, there happening not to be a male attendant present, though he was rarely left without one. The servant soon brought in his medical friend, who on entering the room said, Mr. Hall are you in great pain? "I am in agonies," was the reply—"in agonies sir. Death is come—he is come." His friend supported his fainting head, and offered him a stimulant mixture. "No sir, it is too late—it is all over." He then lifted up his dying eyes to heaven, and said in a faltering voice, "Come Lord Jesus—come quickly." A smile instantly suffused itself over his features; and leaning himself back, without a groan expired.

Oh what a close to what a life! He had evi-

dently been ripening for glory for some time past, and his sun seemed to set in its meridian splendour. Only two sabbaths before, he preached in the evening his last sermon, on the sin of avarice, allowed to be one of his finest efforts by all competent judges who heard him. He had previously intimated to some of his friends, that a discourse on that subject was required ; and forgetting his own infirmities, he summoned up all his energies for the occasion. His conversation with those who sat up with him, during the last week of his severe illness, especially the latter part of it, was peculiarly interesting and affecting. It was always short, as he could only speak a few words at intervals, when the agony a little abated. One night he said, he had been weighing in his own mind the whole matter, between life and death ; and of the two he rather wished to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. He spoke most affectingly of the sufferings of the blessed Saviour, and of the humble hope he had in him. During the last night he said to the friend who sat up with him, amidst his repeated agonies, “ Oh what should I do now, if I had not trusted in the Saviour ? He is now my only stay, my hope, and my salvation.”

An eloquent preacher, who has shown that he profited not a little by frequent intercourse with Mr. Hall, very properly observes in his funeral oration, that we have not indeed to mourn over

one of those sad reverses which root up the outward distinctions of life, and hurl down rank, power, and even royalty, to the lowest level of mankind; but the loss of that intrinsic beauty of mind and character, which, although withdrawn from the world, must survive, when sceptres, diadems and thrones, are mouldered into dust. The few fragments of his genius which remain are only sufficient, like the ruins of some magnificent architecture, to show the world the greatness of its loss.

The world has never been without its lights, nor was all the genius of the land buried in the grave of Mr. Hall. Not only much of talent, but much of talented piety still remains. But when will both be blended in such high degrees again? First-rate genius, through a thousand transmigrations, will keep its being in the world; but when will it re-assume that useful, godly form, which it has just abandoned? When again will the purest living literature take the shape of a simple evangelical piety, that shall 'not shun to declare the whole counsel of God?' There may be another Hume, to poison the fountain of knowledge; another Voltaire, whose genius, like the lightning wrapt in an element of tempestuous darkness, may blacken and destroy. These, and far less appalling forms of intellectual greatness, may revisit the world. The bar and the senate, as they are stages in the road to power, may still display a throng of genius; but when shall we see another Robert Hall, a volun-



tary exile from worldly greatness, with the hopes of no other reward than the divine approbation and the luxury of doing good, expending his mighty powers in the lowly sphere of ministerial labour, to instruct and comfort the wretched and the lost ?\*

On this subject Mr. John Foster, in his "Observations," has offered the following concluding reflections, much to be admired for their truth and fidelity—

The loss he says is reflected on with a sentiment peculiar to the event, never experienced before, nor to be expected in any future instance. The removal of any worthy minister, while in full possession and activity of his faculties, is a mournful occurrence ; but there is the consideration that many such remain, and that perhaps an equal may follow where the esteemed instructor is withdrawn. But the feeling in the present instance is of a loss altogether irreparable. The cultivated portion of the hearers have a sense of privation partaking of desolateness. An animating influence that pervaded, and enlarged, and raised their minds is extinct. While ready to give due honour to all valuable preachers, and knowing that the lights of religious instruction will still shine with useful lustre, and new ones continually rise, they involuntarily and pensively turn to look at the last fading colours in the distance where the greater luminary has set.

\* Mr. Giles's Sermon on the death of Mr. Hall.

The following just Eulogium, written by an intimate friend of Mr. Hall's, a Clergyman in the neighbourhood of Bristol, appeared in one of the public papers, on the Saturday after his decease.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRISTOL JOURNAL.

Sir,

Death is an event of such ordinary occurrence, that it produces a deep impression on the public mind only in those rare instances in which the departed individual was rendered a conspicuous or important portion of human society, as the possessor of uncommon qualities, or the instrument of extensive effects. That such an individual existed in the late Robert Hall, none who were acquainted with his character, his ministry, or his writings, will for a moment question. To consign in silence to the weekly record of deaths, the sudden removal from our world of a man so preeminent, in whatever has the strongest claim on intellectual, moral, or religious admiration, would leave, we feel, a degree of reproach on that city which has been blessed and honoured by his presence, during the last five years of his invaluable life. On such an occasion, were we to hold our peace, the very stones in our streets would cry out against us.

By this melancholy event, a star of the first magnitude and splendour has been eclipsed; and death has seldom claimed a richer spoil. To speak of this incomparable man in language proportioned

to his merit, is far beyond the pretension of this hasty memorial: his just eulogy would require an eloquence like that which his generous spirit has so often displayed at the grave of departed excellence; like that with which he has represented the feelings of the nation on the death of the princess Charlotte; the feelings of Leicester on the death of Mr. Robinson, or those of Bristol on that of Dr. Ryland; an eloquence like that which has so long, and here so lately, charmed into admiring attention the thousands who hung upon his lips. The tones of that hallowed oratory haunt us at this moment with a mental echo that will not soon die away. But alas, the living voice, or another like it, will be heard no more.

In the sublime and boundless themes of religious contemplation, this sacred orator, this christian Demosthenes, triumphed, as in an element congenial with the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. His preaching, it may be truly said (and now that he has ceased either to preach or to hear, said without impropriety) was as far superior, in magnificence of thought and expression, to ordinary preaching, as the *Paradise Lost* is superior to other poetry. It was, if such an image may be allowed, like harmony poured forth by a harp of a thousand strings. But he has himself unconsciously pourtrayed it in his remarks on the Character of Mr. Robinson—

“You have most of you witnessed his pulpit exertions on that spot where he was accustomed

to retain a listening throng, awed, penetrated, delighted and instructed, by his manly and unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him, or without being struck by the perspicuity of his statement, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit. It was the harp of David, which, touched by his powerful hand, sent forth more than mortal sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagrations of Cicero."

The energies of this great spirit were concentrated in devotion; consecrated through a long course of years to the religious benefit of man, and the glory of a redeeming God. The intellectual sublimity and beauty of his mind were in perfect harmony with the moral elevation and spiritual grace of his character. The singular humility of his heart, the remarkable modesty and affability of his deportment, presented an affecting contrast to the splendour of his genius. His conscientious and unearthly indifference to fame or emolument, was rendered the more striking by his ability to command them, had he wished, with his tongue and with his pen. Combining the intellect of a Pascal, with the oratory of a Massillon, he retained through life a transparent simplicity and sincerity, as inimitable as the wonders of his reason and eloquence; while all his endowments were embalmed and crowned by a seraphic piety.



But praise is useless here ; ‘his praise is in all the churches.’ So long as genius, hallowed and sublimed by devotion, shall command veneration, the name of ROBERT HALL will be remembered among the brightest examples of sainted talent ; and above all, ‘his record is on high.’ He has passed from a state of protracted suffering, into that glory to which he had long and fervently aspired, and which he had often pourtrayed with the vividness of one who had caught an anticipating glimpse of the beatific vision.

T. G.

*Clifton, Feb. 23rd 1831.*

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The remains of this blessed man were conveyed to the small burying-place adjoining the meeting-house in Broadmead, on the 2nd of March 1831, and interred close by the side of those of Dr. Ryland. The funeral was conducted on foot, and never was a tribute of more genuine respect paid to the memory of any individual, than was exhibited by the friends of Robert Hall. About eleven o'clock the corpse was placed on a bier, at the residence of the deceased in Ashley-place, and borne on shoulders to Broadmead, where a large number of respectable persons, principally members of his congregation, but including also ministers and people of almost every denomination in the city, joined the procession. After the mutes, followed three of the medical attendants, and

three officiating ministers. The pall-bearers were six ministers, the mourners six deacons of the church, followed by the students of the academy, the congregation and friends, four abreast. On arriving at Broadmead the corpse was placed in front of the pulpit, from which the deceased had so recently imparted to his flock the great truths of christianity, with a force of reasoning and a strain of eloquence that has never been surpassed. The place of worship was deeply hung with black, and was crowded to excess; the female part of the audience occupied the galleries, to which they had been exclusively admitted while the funeral procession was advancing. The utmost solemnity prevailed throughout, and there were but few present who could refrain from tears.

After singing and prayer Mr. Crisp, the resident minister at Broadmead, ascended the pulpit, and delivered a most feeling address. He observed, that though silence, except the language of prayer, might be deemed most suitable to the solemnity of the occasion, he could not allow it to pass without delivering a few plain words, not for the purpose of eulogising the dead, but to edify the living. Yet, from the memory of such a man, such a friend, such a saint, such a minister of the new testament, he could not withhold the expression of his profound respect. Dear and venerable man of God! He was no longer among them; but the memory of what he once was would exist as long as there were hearts remaining to cherish the

recollection. To a childlike simplicity of character, their lamented friend and pastor united the highest intellectual attainments, and a mind deeply imbued with the spirit of his Saviour, at whose feet he sat with humble delight, whilst his hearers hung upon the enchanting eloquence which fell from his lips. When such a man was removed from the earth, not only his flock but the whole christian world sustained a loss. His congregation especially could not but mourn, when they reflected that they had only for a few short years enjoyed the advantage of his labours and his prayers. He had been called away from them while his great powers possessed all the fragrance of spring, with the vigour and maturity of autumn. Those who were preparing for the ministerial office, had sustained an irreparable loss, in being deprived of one of the finest models of pulpit eloquence, combined with intellectual talents of the highest order. Who could have attended his preaching without being in some degree impressed with the truths of the gospel, presented to them in so lovely a form? Much indeed, but not too much, was it to be regretted that his retiring diffidence of character, his antipathy to appear in print, had deprived the world of compositions displaying a vigour and richness of language rarely equalled, and a chasteness of imagination which presented divine truth adorned with all its native beauty and grandeur. His discourses were eminently distinguished by an unction from the Holy

One; they had the marvellous excellence, not only of delighting the strongest and most cultivated minds, but of edifying the commonest and most illiterate hearers, and the interests of one were never sacrificed to those of the other.

Those instructions were at an end, and what a loss had they now to mourn over! More than this, they had lost his prayers: and they all knew with what energy his petitions were presented, with what sweetness, simplicity and humility, he poured forth his soul in holy filial breathings, before God. What had they not lost too, in being deprived of his example! His reverence for his great Lord absorbed all other considerations; his constant aim was to think little of himself, and to magnify his Saviour. Enjoying the highest human applause he lived in a purer element, where its injurious effects were not felt, and cherished the deepest conviction that nothing but a moral conformity to the divine image constituted real eminence. The subject of incessant pain, it was not a little extraordinary that his intellectual powers had been sustained with so much energy, both in public and in private. Many of those who had listened with rapture to his powerful addresses from the pulpit, had been grieved to see him a few minutes after, writhing in all but mortal agony; yet amidst sufferings like these he maintained a charming sweetness of demeanour to all around him, and an uncomplaining submission to the will of God. Patience had indeed its perfect work.




Though however he is no more in this world it does not become us to dwell on the dark side of the scene, but to remember with gratitude and thankfulness that his life had been spared so long, and that his labours had extended through a period of more than half a century. This very place (Broadmead) had witnessed the commencement and the close of his honourable career, and only for two sabbaths had his public labours been suspended. There is reason also for gratitude that so far from his great powers being impaired, they evidently shone brighter towards the close of life, accompanied with an encreasing degree of spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. Our revered friend died as he had lived; the great truths which he had taught to others supported him in the final struggle, and produced that peace which passeth all understanding. Amidst the greatest agonies, in his last moments, with his fine faculties in full vigour, he rejoiced in that Saviour, the dignity of whose person and the alsufficiency of whose atonement, it had so long been his delight to magnify and exalt.

FINIS.



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